

MEMORIES



ANNA JOSEPH

THE REV. M. C. PUNNUSE

(Written a hundred years ago about my paternal grand father)

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I am glad of the opportunity to say a few words regarding my late dear fellow worker, the Rev. M. C. Punnuse. Of his earlier life I can not speak personally, but when some six years ago our then Bishop sent him to me to act as reader at Mundakayam with the possibility of his being ordained for that place, he wrote very highly of his painstaking and thoroughness in all his previous work.

Mundakayam is confessedly a difficult place to fill. The climate is unhealthy, and the people gathered in from all parts, and exposed to bad influences from numerous travellers to Peerumedu and Madura, need peculiar care.

After the death of the Rev. H. Baker, as so often happens in our poorly manned mission, Mundakayam was left without careful supervision for five years. Muhammeden traders and Romanists always ready to do mischief, caused much trouble, and the large wooden church fell into ruins. When I took charge, that and the wooden bungalow were past repair. The reader who first assisted me fell into grievous sin, and had to be excommunicated, and did much evil. The foundations of a new stone church were laid, but there was no pastor's house. Prayer meetings and services were poorly attended. At such a time Punnuse came on probation. I soon found that he was a man of sterling worth and sound judgement. He won the respect and the love of the people in a very marked way. Dealing with wrong, he tolerated no compromise and reported all fully to me, while at the same time in every possible way he showed himself a friend and helper of the people. Changed lives, well attended services, attested the reality of his work. In a short time a parsonage was built and the large stone church completed, in both of which he rendered most efficient help. The contributions of the people also increased and in a few years I was able to heartily recommend him to the Bishop and the Home Committee, as fit for ordination. During the time he was studying in the Cambridge Nicholson Institution he spent most of his vacations at Mundakayam

and on his return after ordination as Deacon received a very warm welcome. The Romanists showed their regard for him by making a vigorous effort to win him over. A French Jesuit visited him several times to discuss 'Protestantism' and gave him one of their best controversial works. Mr. Punnuse's knowledge of the scriptures and history proved too much for the Jesuit and he retired.

In December last I had the pleasure of assisting at his ordination as priest. Shortly after the Home Committee sanctioned the transfer of the Pastorate to the Church Council as it was capable of fulfilling all the requirements of the Council.

At the beginning of March he came into Kottayam, to take part in our bimonthly devotional meeting of agents and gave a very earnest address. As the Church Council was to meet in ten days to finally take over the Mundakayam Pastorate, I asked him to stay in Kottayam till then. But he declined on the ground that he had meetings to take.

On the Sunday before the Council meeting he was taken ill with malarial fever in church, and a fortnight later passed away. During his illness his thoughts were continually with his people and he frequently offered prayers for them. His death caused sincere grief to the members of his congregation, and the scene at his funeral was most touching. Much sympathy is felt for his widow and for young children.

I would ask for the prayers of my readers that a like-minded successor may be found. God buries His workmen but carries on His work. In the death of Rev. M. C. Punnuse the Church in Travencore has lost one of its most devoted Pastors in the very prime of life. Difficult as it is for us to realise what God's purpose is in removing one whose place is so difficult to fill, and when workers are so few, we rejoice to call to mind that He makes no mistakes and that no life yielded to Him is wasted. The Christian does not reckon life by the length of days on earth. His life is hid with Christ in God, and when he passes away from this world and God's service here, he enters upon a higher life and more perfect service, and therefore it is that we Christians sorrow not for those who die as others who have no hope. Christ has taken away the sting of death and opened the gate of Heaven to all believers by His death and resurrection for us. Death has become the gate of life and our loss is their gain, and if earth is poorer Heaven is richer. The length

of a life is not the measure of its usefulness. We thank God for a long life such as that of the Earl of Shaftesbury with all its days crowded with usefulness, but we remember too how short, as men count shortness, was the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and how short were the lives of some of the chiefest of his servants. Henry Martin, Keith Falconer, Bishop Hannington, Mackay of Uganda, General Gordon are names that immediately occur to us. Their lives were short, but their work was done, and their examples live on. It is so regarding our brother of whom we have chiefly written. And the lesson to us all is to give ourselves unreservedly to God, and having obtained pardon for our sins through Christ's blood, to seek to do the most we can each day for him, realising His presence and rejoicing in His love. Life here at longest is short, but beyond is the joy of heaven. Nearer to some of us than we think.

A. F. PAINTER

When Bishop T. B. Benjamin was in the Cambridge Nicholson Institute (popularly known as the CNI) in Kottayam, he came across this reference to his wife's (and mine) grand- father in an old Diocesan record.

An Explanation : When I read what the Rev. Painter had to say about our grand-father, Rev. M.C.Punnuse who died in Mundakayam, it occurred to me that it would be good for the younger members of the Mangalam family to know something about the devotion to God that our ancestors had. If most of us are well off and live in comfort, it must be because of them.

As I wrote, it took on the nature of an autobiography! I'm sorry about it but I had a lot of spare time, I still have the capacity to write and a good memory for events in the distant past. That is the explanation for writing these Memories.

I'm sure the older generation will enjoy reading this. The younger generation, so out of touch with events in the distant past, may not find it interesting. You can always keep it aside. Don't throw it away.

Some time, when you are older, you might want to read it!

Thodupuzha Ammachy, Punchiri Valyappachen and Achamma Kochamma are the people from whom I gathered the information. At the time I had no intention whatsoever, of writing down what I heard from them.

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DOWN MEMORY LANE

(ANNA JOSEPH)

CHAPTER 1

My life began on February 24, 1918, at Pallom, a suburb of Kottayam in Kerala. My mother's father, Rev. T.K. Ninan, was the pastor of the local Anglican Church there, and my mother, expecting me, her second child, was staying in the parsonage with her parents. Eighty years ago, no one thought of going to a hospital to have a baby. Why, my own children, were all born at home, not in a hospital, though a doctor-friend was present in case her help was needed.

Pallom was the home-town of my maternal grand-mother's father, a lawyer, who practised his profession in Chavakad in Trichur District. Grand-mother was his only child by his first marriage. Her mother, a beautiful young woman, who belonged to the Thadathil family in Kottayam, had died at the early age of nineteen. According to a family legend, a few weeks after childbirth, with her bountiful hair, wet and loose after an oil bath, she had stood by the road-side, with other members of the family, to see a Bishop from Syria pass by, and someone had cast an evil eye on her. Actually she must have caught a chill that developed into pneumonia. She died a few days later leaving a motherless infant behind, my grand-mother. She was lucky in her step-mother and grew up with her father, step-mother and siblings in Chavakad.

Chacko Vakil gifted to my grand-mother a spacious house in a large compound in Pallom, on the Main Central Road that still connects Trivandrum, the capital, with Kottayam and beyond.

When my mother told her mother that she thought the baby was on its way, she escorted her from the parsonage to her own house, Puthenparambil, and I was born two hours, later, at 8p.m. The First World War (1914-1918) was still being fought in the killing fields of Europe.

My mother's father, Rev. T.K. Ninan, belonged to the Thottunkal family in Warikad, Thiruvella. He was, by all accounts, a patient, warm, and affectionate father, and a devout Anglican pastor. For several years he was associated with the Adoor Mission. Today Adoor is a large flourishing town but a hundred years ago it was just a village in the out-backs. So the children, both boys and girls, went to boarding schools in Kottayam. Fifty odd miles by bullock cart was a formidable journey then, and Ammachy used to regale us sometimes with stories of their long nocturnal trips.

Grand-father Ninan was a diabetic. When he was just fifty-one, he developed a painful carbuncle on his back and was operated on in the Government Hospital, Alleppey, by Dr. Pandala, an eminent surgeon. At that time Alleppey seems to have been a more important town, with better facilities than Kottayam. This was probably because it was a commercial centre with several British firms that exported spices and coir products through its harbour.

Since anaesthetics had not yet come into use, doctors had to operate without them and naturally, the surgery was extremely painful. The doctor said later that during the surgery he heard his patient pray 'Lord, you went through greater pain than this on the cross. Help me to endure this pain.' The surgeon later said that listening to that prayer, said again and again, made him feel that he was operating on a saint.

He did not recover from that surgery. When he knew that he was dying, he called his eldest son, T.N. Kurien and entrusted the family to him. Kurien was just twenty-five. From Alleppey, the body was brought to Pallom and buried in the Anglican cemetery there. The mode of transport must have been a 'kettuvallom'.

The two daughters, my mother and her sister, were already married. Ninan achen had sold his property in Warikad and bought twenty acres of land in Kuzhimattam, near Pallom. When we

were children, we used to go there for picnics, something very few families did at that time. The rubber trees there were not tapped as the the price of rubber was so low that it was not worth tapping them.

Uncle Kurien had a house built there, and planned to live there after his retirement from his job as Superintendent of the C.M.S. Press, Kottayam, but he died of a heart attack, suddenly and unexpectedly, at the age of fifty-one in December, 1943 I was then teaching in the Andhra Christian College, Guntur, and was devastated when my mother wrote to say he had died

Uncle T.N. Jacob, a younger brother of T.N. Kurien, was one of the handsomest men I have seen, and had a charming personality. He and his first wife, Aleyamma Kochamma, were both teachers in Government High Schools in Trivandrum-My mother and Aleyamma Kochamma had been class-mates and friends when they were in the Baker Memorial School, Kottayam. While my mother got married after teaching for a spell in the Buchanan Institute, Pallom, Eliamma Kochamma went on to the Women's Christian College, Madras, from where she graduated. That must have been about ninety years ago

After graduation Eliamma Kochamma became a teacher in the Government High School for Girls in Trivandrum, and got married to Uncle Jacob, who was also teaching there in a Government High School for boys- Eleven days after the birth of her third child, Eliamma Kochamma died of a fever. It was probably an infection of some sort, but those were days before doctors had the weapon of antibiotics in their bags-Ammai and Pappachayan went to Trivandrum and brought the three children away to Kottayam, where they grew up-

In 1927 T.N. Jacob got a scholarship to go to the Columbia University in New York to work for a Master's degree in Education. Seventy years ago, going to America was what going to the moon is like today. My sister, Ammini, had just been born, and

Ammachy was resting in bed (women were made to rest in bed for 56 days after child-birth) When Kunjchachen came to say good bye to her, she cried, and all of us joined in ! As he walked to the gate to get into the car, we watched through the window and thought we would never set eyes on him again. He boarded a ship to New York from Colombo and sent us picture. Post cards from Aden and Suez. They took a long time to reach us since there was no air-mail service then I think it took him twenty-four days to get to New York from Colombo.

On his return to India with a doctorate in Education, Uncle Jacob joined the staff of the Maharaja's Training College, Mysore as Professor of Education, and Grand-mother and his three children went to live with him. Their cook was Pappen, who in later years was very much in demand to cook for wedding receptions in Kottayam.

In 1931 when Pappachachen took his family to Mysore during Christmas holidays, he took my sister and me along, too. That was the way he functioned. En route we spent a few days in Coimbatore with Grand-mother's sister, Mrs. C.K. Mathai (Mrs. Kuruville Jacob's mother) Mr. Mathai was Deputy Collector there that was a big job then. The Collector, of course, was an English man. I don't know what Collectors are supposed to collect. Taxes, perhaps. All I can remember is that the Mathais lived in a large government house in a huge compound and the place was crawling with peons in uniform.

It was the Christmas season, and those who came to 'wish' Uncle Mathai, brought Christmas cakes. Kochamma hacked away at the icing and put it aside but to us that was the most delicious part of the cakes ! Once when the Mathais lived in Salem, Kochamma took us shopping to choose our Christmas presents. I remember that I chose a box of writing materials and my brother chose a foot-ball ! Kochamma who waited in the car while we made our choice, paid the

bill ! The salary of a Deputy Collector then was seven hundred rupees a month, a princely amount at that time.

From Coimbatore we travelled to Mysore by bus. Dusk had set in as we approached the city and I can still recall the excitement of seeing the electric lights on Chamundi Hill, looking like a gorgeous garland- Perhaps it was wrong of the Maharajas to concentrate on beautifying the capital city, paying little attention to the basic needs of the poor in the rural areas- But at that time all I thought was that Mysore was just beautiful- In Kunjchachen's house in Mysore we loved to get up on a chair and switch the electric lights on and off. They were a novelty to us, as electricity had not yet reached our part of Travancore in 1931.

As a Professor in the Mysore University, Kunjchachen had a salary of four hundred rupees. That was a lot of money at that time and he could afford a chauffeur, a cook and a cleaning woman- Every day we went sight-seeing- the Mysore Palace, the Lalitha Mahal Palace, the Chamundi Hill, the bull carved out of granite, the royal garage

Soon after our arrival, Kunjchachen took us to a shoe shop and bought chappals for all of us ! At that time very few people in Kerala wore chappals- To this day ! cannot figure out why. It was not a question of not being able to afford them. Even in the 1940's, when visitors from a long way off came to KCJ's home in Puthuvely, his mother would first offer them a 'kindi' of water to wash their bare feet. That was the polite thing to do, and a real need after a long walk of several miles.

When we returned to our boarding schools, our chappals were a novelty for our school-mates, and we abandoned them quickly ! The year was 1931. My father always wore shoes or chappals. He told us that he had got used to them when, as a

Forester, he had to walk through forested areas full of crawling creatures.

The day before New Year's Day we went to Bangalore to see the New Year Parade-At that time Bangalore was a military station and a large number of Englishmen lived there- The New year Parade was an occasion to display the might and glory of the British Empire !

There were only three or four Syrian Christian families in Bangalore at that time. K. Mathan and K. Chandy (not related) were members of the Maharaja's Advisory Council, I think. Uncle C.K. Mathai's brother, Mr. C.K. Jacob worked for the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. A car-load of us descended on him on New Year's eve. I suppose he had had some notice !

It was in Bangalore that we saw a 'Talkie' for the first time in our lives- It was exciting to actually hear the people on the screen talk ! We take it for granted now, but till then we had only watched 'silent movies', and we had watched them in tents in dry paddy.-fields, not in movie theatres ! There was some hugging and kissing in the film, which actually did not bother us, children, because the characters in strange clothes seemed to belong to a strange country, spoke English, and what they did was their business- But Ammai was upset for our sakes and wanted to take us out of the theatre! We were on tenterhooks till Pappachayan sternly told her to sit down-and fortunately shedid !

The cousins on both sides of the family were very attached to each other We usually spent our school holidays together, eating off banana leaves and sleeping on mats on the floor-The 'methappa', made only in a certain area of Travancore, was soft and could be rolled up with a pillow inside. To our boarding schools we could take a methappa, a nerappa, a pillow, and a sheet for covering ourselves on a cold night. In Mahilalayam we could take a thin mattress if we produced a medical certificate !

After uncle T.N. Jacob became a Professor of Education in the Maharaja's College, Mysore, he told his family of his intention

to marry Anugrah Harinarain, a Professor in the Kinnaird College, Lahore, whom he had met in New York.

At that time marriages to people outside the community were very rare among Syrian Christians, and the news was greeted with shock and bewilderment by the family, but after meeting her everyone thought it was a good idea. The wedding took place in Allahabad, Aunty's home town and Appachen and Pappachachen went for the wedding. They had to change trains at Shoranur, Madras and Calcutta. When they returned after meeting Aunty's people, they told everyone that there was a prosperous, well-educated Christian Community in Allahabad, most of whom had been educated in Christian Schools and the Ewing Christian College. It was just that we did not know about them.

In Mysore, Auntie got a job as Principal of a Teacher Training School for women. My sister and I once spent our summer holidays in Mysore we had a most enjoyable time with Auntie, Kunjchachen, Kochu Baby, Kunju, Eliam and Paul- We took turns pushing Paul around in a pram which, by the way, was a novelty to us.

In 1938, at the relatively early age of forty-three Uncle Jacob contracted cirrhosis of the liver, generally attributed then to alcoholism. The doctors in Mysore, some of whom were his friends, were puzzled because they knew he was not a heavy drinker. But there he was, dying, and there was nothing they could do for him. When Pappachachen, Ammai, and my parents went to Mysore to see him, they decided to bring him away to Kottayam. They came by car, with him and his family, the car, driven by the faithful Kurien Chettan.

When they reached Nagambadam bridge, he said he wished to sit up, as he could get the smell of Kottayam. He died two days later on April 1st, 1938 and was buried in Pallom, not far from where his father was buried-Till the end his mind was clear. He was aware that I was writing my final Honours examinations

then and wanted to know how I was faring. My mother assured him they were going on well, and he said that he knew I would do well. My friends in the Q.M.C Hostel removed the fairly long obituary column in The Hindu, and saw to it that I did not get the news of his death till my exams were over. After they were over, Mrs.Kuruvilla Jacob took me to her home and broke the sad news to me. I was devastated; she too had lost a favourite cousin.

We called our youngest maternal uncle Kochuppappen. He is a good musician, good with young people, and is the choir-master at the Kanjikuzhi Chapel in Kottayam. He lost his wife not long ago.

Even after Uncle Jacob's untimely death Auntie continued her job as Principal of a Training School for women for a few more years. She and her son, Paul, came to my wedding in Thodupuzha in April, 1943. Paul still remembers Appachen taking him to the river to catch tiny fish with a Kerala towel or 'thorth'.

Auntie Anugrah and Paul went to North India after a time, and she was Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. in New Delhi for some years. She attended the wedding of my brother, George, to Nalini in Delhi-They have snapshots of her signing the marriage register as a witness.

After a career in the Armed Forces, Paul has now settled down in the Defence Colony in Bangalore, not far from where we live. It is always a pleasure to have him drop in for a chat at 249. His wife, Yasmin, is a very good badminton player. He has a son and two daughters, all married-

After my mother's father died, my grand-mother lived with my uncle, T.N. Kurien, in the C.M.S. Press Bangalow. Syrian Christian parents usually live with their sons when they are too old to live alone- They only stay for short periods with their married daughters- This could be because the sons inherit the landed property and feel responsible for the well-being of the

parents as they grow old- We used to look forward to our grandmother's visits to Thodupuzha. She was a sport, and great fun to be with. Uncle Kurien always came and took her away to Kottayam after a few weeks.

She died of a urinary infection suddenly and unexpectedly, in 1934 at the relatively early age of sixty-one- No one was aware that she had a problem; modesty must have prevented her from telling anyone.

We were staying in Ernakulam at that time, and one day my mother just fell-she had to go and see her. She must have had a premonition of some sort. We went by motor-boat, and on getting to Kottayam, my mother realised that grand-mother was very ill indeed- We were at her bedside when she breathed her last the next morning. She was only sixty-one, but at that time, at least to her grand-children, she seemed to be quite old, old enough to die.

Doctors in that era did not have the weapon of antibiotics they now have, and every illness was treated with a pink mixture. In Kottayam, if any of us fell ill, Dr. A.T. Mathew gave us six doses of a pink mixture. In Thodupuzha, if any of us so much as sneezed, Appachen would take a bottle, go to Dr. Stephen and return with six doses of a pink mixture. Years later, in Alwaye, Mr. V.E. Mathai of the Rural Medical Mission Dispensary, used to give us tiny packets of powdered pills along with the pink mixture. The kind of private hospitals we now have, did not exist then and doctors did not take Post-graduate degrees. Some doctors, with no degrees, who practised in villages and small towns, actually were quite good.

CHAPTER 2

My father's mother's brother, Mr. M.C. Cherian, who owned the Punchiri Boat Service, was an interesting and knowledgeable conversationalist. His wife was my god-mother. After my graduation and before I got a job, I spent a lot of time with them in their home in Kottayam. Most of what I have written about my father's side of the family is based on conversations I had with him in 1938-sixty years ago.

According to him, his father (my great grand-father), who belonged to the Valiapally parish in Kottayam, remarried 'too soon' after the death of his wife, without waiting for the customary forty days of mourning. He did not feel he had done anything wrong as he had small children who needed a woman's care-The ecclesiastical authorities, however, frowned upon this 'indecent haste' and excommunicated him. And what did the head-strong man do? He approached the newly arrived C.M.S. Missionaries, who had a low opinion of the local Church, anyway. They welcomed him into their Church, and the children, including the girls, went to Mission Schools in Kottayam, and all was well. However, a few years later, he faced the problem of finding a bride-groom for his daughter (my grand-mother). He knew he would have to find one from outside Kottayam. Loading a country-boat (Kettuvallom) with provisions for several days, he took to the water-ways. In those days in our part of the world, with its back-waters, canals and rivers, people travelled (when they did travel) either by country-boat or bullock-cart. When people had to go short distances, they just tucked up their dhotis and walked! Why, I can remember a time, say seventy years ago, when only three or four people in Kottayam had cars!

To get back to my great-grand-father's journey in search of a bride-groom for his daughter, my grand-mother-One evening, as usual, they tied up their boat by the side of the river to cook their evening meal. Suddenly he heard the sound of someone reading

aloud. He listened, and realised that the reading was from the Bible. He approached the house and knew that what he heard was the voice of a young man reading from the Bible to his grandfather who, probably could not read. The C.M.S. Press in Kottayam, had begun printing books in 1821. By 1829 five thousand copies of the New Testament in Malayalam had been printed, and slowly they were penetrating into the interior. Somehow my father's paternal grand-father had acquired a copy

At that time it was most natural to offer hospitality to wayfarers, even if they were strangers, and the two men, who were pleasantly surprised to discover that they were both from the Canaanite community, supped together, and took a liking for each other. The man from Kottayam told his host the purpose of his journey and they saw the hand of God in their meeting. They agreed that Punnoose, the young Bible-reader (my grand-father) would be a suitable husband for the girl in Kottayam (my grand-mother). Almost like an Old Testament story, isn't it? Well, the young man was willing to go to Kottayam, and later he married my grand-mother, Mariam. At Kottayam he went to a Christian school for boys, and she to a Christian school for girls, both run by C.M.S. missionaries. After finishing school and a period of training, he got ordained as a pastor.

Today Mundakayam is a flourishing town, a centre of trade and commerce, but a hundred years ago it was a village in a malarial area, and it was difficult to find pastors with families, willing to go and work there. My grand-father, Rev. Punnoose, the young Bible-reader, volunteered to go there, lived there with his family for a few years, caught malaria, and died within a fortnight, at the age of thirty-seven, in 1894.

There was much sympathy in missionary circles for the thirty-one-year-old widow left behind with five children. The youngest, Achamma Kochamma, was a posthumous child, born a few months after her father's death. Grand-mother's brother, Punchiri M.C. Cherian, went to Mundakayam and brought his widowed sister and her five children to Kottayam. What an arduous and sad journey that must have been!

Many years later, in 1950, after his son, M.P. Jacob, had become a wealthy man, he had the 'madbaha' of the Mundakayam Church renovated as a memorial to his father, Rev. Punnoose.

After staying for a while in Kottayam with her brother, grand mother told him that perhaps she should go and live in Eravipeeror, her husband's home village. After all he had property there. However, after living there for a few months, with her Kottayam back-ground and natural intelligence, she realised that without education, her children would grow up as country bumpkins, so she returned to Kottayam where she sent her children to good schools. She must have been a fantastic woman!

At Kottayam she asked her brother to find her a small house as she did not wish to be a burden on him. Reluctantly he looked for and found her one in Chungam, close to Rev. T.K. Benjamin's house. Later she asked for and got a job as a Bible woman. The work involved was visiting Hindu homes to read portions of the Bible to women in the house. They would finish their chores quickly in order to listen to stories from the Bible. The salary was seven rupees a month, and afternoons were free. A rupee went a long way at that time, and with seven rupees you could run a house-hold. At that time a Primary School Teacher's salary was eight rupees, and he had to work the whole day!

Grand-mother refused to yield to self-pity, and with moral support from her brother, she managed to cope. Every single morning, after his early morning cup of coffee, he would walk all the way to Chungam from his home on the other side of the town just to give her the reassurance that he was there. Rev. T.K. Benjamin, though taciturn and non-interfering, was supportive by being just next-door.

As the children grew up and attended schools in Kottayam, the hopes of the relatives, friends of the family and the C.M.S. Missionaries in Kottayam, were centred on M.P. Korah, the second son,

who had a brilliant mind and a good academic record in the C.M.S. College. The C.M.S. Missionaries gave him a scholarship to go to the Madras Christian College, and everyone had high hopes for him. But the family's trials were not over, for he came back home with a wasting disease which the doctors in Madras were unable to diagnose. Their tests ruled out T.B. and they said it was a rare disease spread by cockroaches. In his autobiography Mr. K.C. Mamrnen Mapillai, who was with him in the Christian College, has referred to his tragic death at the early age of twenty-two. When a well-meaning neighbour said to his mother that God seemed to be heartless, she replied stoically that when God closed one door, he never failed to open another.

And God did open another door. The C.M.S. missionaries gave M.P. Jacob a scholarship of two thousand rupees to cover the expenses of studying in the Forest College, Dehra Doon-Even today Dehra Doon seems to be a long way off. In those days it took him several days, by all kinds of means of transport, to get there. The easy means of communication, by mail and by telephone, that we now take for granted, did not exist then. Before he left, Uncle Cherian had found a wife for him !

When M.P. Jacob returned from Dehra Doon after three years he got a job as a First-Grade Ranger in the Forest Department of Travancore State on a salary of a hundred and fifty rupees. Today we pay our servants much more than that but in those days, when the salary of a Primary School teacher was eight rupees a month, a hundred and fifty rupees was a large sum of money.

As soon as he could manage it, Uncle Jacob bought two acres of land near Eerekadavu, Kottayam, had a spacious house built there, and took his mother to live there with his family. Grandmother, however, spent a lot of time with her brother, Cherian, in Kutcherikadavu, who had been a tower of strength to her after her husband's death. When we were children, we regarded 'Mangalam', that sprawling house in Eerekadavu, as our paternal home,

and were sad to hear a few years ago that it had been sold to someone for whom it is just a house.

In 1919, while Grand-mother was staying with her brother, she fell ill with fever (what else ?) and died within a few days at the age of sixty-two. Today doctors say fever is the symptom of a disease, not a disease, but in those days people just said 'so and so' died of a fever,

At that time very few people reached the venerable age of sixty. When Mr. M.C. Cherian (Punchiri) was seventy, there was a big celebration, with members of the extended family from far and near getting together in his home in Katcherikadavu. There was a service of thanks-giving in the Church in the morning, followed by an elaborate breakfast served on banana leaves, much enjoyment and laughter, and then a heavy lunch. A photographer came to take a group photo, copies of which were later framed and displayed on the walls. No one had cameras to click and even photograph albums came much later.

Uncle M P. Jacob was our de facto grand-father and, because his wife was also generous and hospitable, their sprawling government bungalows in Konni and Malayattoor, with numerous peons and servants, were places we loved to visit during the summer holidays. I can remember a delightful summer vacation in Malayattoor when four huge elephants, one of them with a baby elephant, were brought from the forest to the large 'elephant cage' with four rooms near the Forest Bungalow. We loved to watch them being trained to obey the orders of the mahouts-turn right, turn left, go forward, stop, go backward, stop-etc.

Everyone knew that there were some deep, dangerous areas in the nearby Periyar river in which crocodiles lurked. Once in a while, a hungry crocodile would emerge from its under-water cave in search of prey, and woe to the unwary animal or human being who stood close to the river ! We listened, wide-eyed and terror-stricken, to the stories of terrible mishaps narrated to us

by the peons on duty, and when we went to the nearby Periyar river to bathe, we kept to the shallow areas.

And then one day tragedy struck ! A young man, who had been washing his clothes on a granite stone with his back to the river, had been dragged away by a crocodile. According to the peons, the crocodile had lifted him up 'triumphantly' thrice, before it disappeared into its underwater cave to enjoy its gruesome repast. I suppose it had just come up to breathe !

We accompanied Valiammachy to the young man's home. In the distance we could see the body, or what was left of it, being burned on the funeral pyre, In those days children were exposed to such harsh facts of life, and adults made no attempt to hide them from them. Illness, death, funerals, and cremations in the compounds of Hindu neighbours, were all realities of life that we grew up with.

We climbed the Malayattoor hill on a Sunday in April (Puthu njarazhcha) along with hundreds of pilgrims. In front of the Roman Catholic Church at the top of the hill, we looked with awe and reverence at a small depression in the rock, regarded by faithful believers as the foot-print of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

KULATHOOPUZHA

Appachen was a Forester in the Forest Department of the Government of Travancore when he got married in 1913. His salary was thirty-five rupees a month. Incredible as it may seem today, it was quite a lot of money in 1913 when household expenses for a small family did not exceed ten rupees. Primary school teachers in private schools had to maintain their families on eight rupees. In that remote village, eggs were then fifty for a rupee, and a small basket of fish cost only the equivalent of our twenty paise. Good fish costs a hundred and fifty rupees a kilo in Indiranagar today ! A gold sovereign then was eight rupees. Why, I can remember a time when it remained at thirteen rupees, ten annas for many years !

According to Ammachy, the local provisions merchant used to send provisions for the kitchen to all government officials on the first of every month. Probably that was to prevent them from having too close a scrutiny of his shenanigans like cutting down trees from the forest to sell them to timber merchants. She used to be embarrassed about it but that was the done thing.

Uncle Jacob, Appachen's brother, was a high official in the Forest Department by this time, and he did not want his brother to continue in that department. Too many temptations.

KOLLAM (1923-1926)

Uncle Jacob had a wealthy Muslim friend who owned an oil mill in Kollam. We called him 'Uthumanpilla Kaakka'. Appachen became manager of that mill after he resigned his government job. I was five and my brother, George, was three. Ninan was born in Kollam. Thankacha went to a Convent school along with Evamma Kochamma whose father was the Sarkar Vakeel (Government Pleader) there. Evamma Kochamma, who died a few months ago, lived in Cooke Town, Bangalore. A visit to her was an experience I always looked forward to.

I was taken to a Government Girls' School nearby. When they gave me an entrance test, the teachers decided I was good enough for Standard II, overlooking the fact that I was only five years old. On the first two days I returned home faking a stomach ache. When I tried the same ruse on the third day, Ammachy picked up a stick and told me firmly to go right back to school, which I did. Needless to say I had no more stomach aches !

When my second brother, Ninan, was two years old, he had an attack of what was then called 'Pilla vatham', rheumatism of children. Doctors tried many remedies, but none of them worked. Then one day, to his good fortune, a 'Vaidyan' came from out of the blue, and offered to treat him. Since doctors had washed their hands of him, this offer was accepted, though not without

misgivings. The treatment involved a lot of labour, but workers from the mill helped out. Freshly-ground herbal medicines had to be applied non-stop, day and night. Fortunately that unknown vaidyan's treatment was effective.

Mr. George Cherian (Pulimoottil) was working in the Postal Department and staying with us at that time. When he went to Madras on work, Ammachy asked him to get me a doll as a reward for keeping Knuju amused when she went to the kitchen or to have a bath. Later on, when he was in Selaiyur Hall in Tambaram, he was in the Basket Ball team and seemed none the worse for that attack of 'Pilla vatham'.

The Years in Thodupuzha

We went to Thodupuzha from Kollam in 1926. Appachen and his cousin, P. M. Abraham (Alleppey) had a joint venture in Ancherikkal, a hilly area near Thodupuzha. Avarachayan spent the money and Appachen was the working partner. Up in the hills, huge trees were felled and pruned, dragged down the hill-side by huge elephants and floated down the rivers in 'chengadoms' or rafts, in the rainy season when the rivers were full. Bamboos and very thick ropes (vadam) were used in the making of these floats. Most of the men who made and manoeuvred them, and delivered them to the government depot in Vettikkattumuk near Vaikom, were local Muslims-Nobody thought of that as deforestation then !

Though Thodupuzha was the Taluk headquarters, it was a small town when we went to live there more than seventy years ago. At first we lived in a rented house, Arakkal, close to the Police-Station, the Kutchery building, and the Anchal office. The rooms of the house were small and airless, or so it seemed to us. There was an 'ara' in the middle for storing paddy. At that time the storing of paddy seems to have been more important to Kerala farmers than the comforts and conveniences of the inmates of the house ! The pit latrine was in a corner of the large compound and there was an apology for a bath-room close to the well. The idea of having bed-rooms with attached bath-rooms and toilets came much later.

When a middle-man told Appachen that a four-acre plot of land, just outside the town, was for sale, he gave him a five-rupee note as advance, and told him to tell the owner that he would buy it. And buy it he did for 1400 rupees ! Today land in that area costs more than a lakh per cent, and nobody is selling. A house was quickly put up, and we moved in there. That was the way Appachen functioned-no dithering, no time-consuming calculation ! I don't think any of his children has inherited that trait from him !

Later he used to say that the house was not meant to be a permanent residence, as he had always thought that when his work was over he would go back and settle down in Kottayam, where he himself had grown up. Seventy odd years later, the family is still there, and extensions have made it a sprawling, spacious house with 'thinna' and elamthinna', attached bathrooms and toilets, arappura, servants' rooms etc. The older children never felt we 'belonged' to Thodupuzha, but Koch and his family seem to have a sense of belonging there.

When cocoanuts were three rupees a hundred, Appachen managed to send all six of us to colleges in Madras. When a friend in the police department was transferred and did not know what to do with his twenty-acre property behind Puravappara, with no access to the main road, he helped him out by buying it. During, school holidays he would take us, and any house-guests we had, for picnics there. In many ways he was way ahead of his times.

Cricket was one of his many interests. Uncle Kurien and he used to go all the way to 'Madras to watch test matches as there was no radio or television. From one such trip he brought back a gramophone with a large brass horn attached to it, and some gramophone records. When news spread in the neighbourhood that we had a contraption from which music came out, small groups of curious men would come to see it and to speculate as to where the sound came from !

Appachen used to buy at throw-away prices gramophone records of Western classical music as well as books from the British superintendents of rubber estates in the area when they had a sale prior to their departure for England. I think all his children are fond of reading because we were introduced to books and acquired the habit of reading very early in life. Even now when I listen to the wonderful music of Beethoven, Bach, Chopin..... I think of him with gratitude in my heart.

On the other side of the main road we had two acres of low-lying land abutting on the river. There servants could wash our clothes and we could bathe and learn to swim in some privacy. It was there that Appachen taught us to swim and to float on our backs. I think in that era it was just assumed that all Keralites could swim !

Appachen was a very positive person, full of enthusiasm, and not at all cynical. He liked to spring surprises on us when we came home from boarding schools or college hostels. If his latest enthusiasm was for ping-pong, he would get a carpenter to make two square ping-pong tables, and have a lean-to built to the main bed-room. We would come home for the next holidays to find that the lean-to had been demolished as it obstructed light and air in the bed-room! And, in its place, there was a badminton court, which, in its turn, was later replaced by a tennis court ! At that time only institutions like the Y.M C A, or residential colleges of a certain standard, had tennis courts. It was not that he was very rich, but he was brimming over with ideas, and he couldn't wait to translate them into action. None of his children has inherited that trait from him !

Appachen brought back seeds and seedlings from wherever he went. If it was jack-fruit seeds from Ceylon now it was something else a little later. When the jack-fruit trees did not yield fruit in three years, as he had been assured they would, he scratched his chin, and said it must have something to do with the

soil and the climate! However, the pine-apple saplings he brought did very well and he inflicted them on visitors who happened to remark how well they were doing. He would not tell us how he got all that past the Customs Inspectors !

Appachen's loyalty to the Diocese was total. He often took off for Kottayam by the early morning bus, and usually returned in the evening. But sometimes he was away for two or three days as he was on several Diocesan Committees-the Property Committee, the Finance Committee etc. As Ammachy was capable, and there were always reliable resident servants, she could cope.

On discovering that unscrupulous tenants had taken over large areas of Diocesan land in the hill areas, he decided to do something about it. Painstakingly he studied the relevant documents, and filed cases in the Civil Court in Thodupuzha on behalf of the Diocese. Over a period of time, after several appearances in court, he managed to get back most of the land for the Diocese. At his funeral, someone from that area, who spoke with great feeling, pointed out that he made nothing for himself from that effort, though he could have done without anyone coming to know about it.

For as long as he was active he found something to do. When the Town Hall was being built, Appachen went there every day to supervise the work that went on there. I wonder if the bougain-villa shrubs he planted around the hall are still flowering !

Appachen, who had been a very active person, took to his bed and stopped walking, too soon, I now think. We should have insisted on his walking around with a walking stick at least within the house. His legs became weak from disuse, I now feel. Fortunately he could read and write, and his mind was alert till the end.

I can remember the names of my primary school teachers in Thodupuzha.-Meenakshiamma, Parukuttyamma and Kochupappi amma In those days school began with the singing of the 'Vancheesa Mangalam' wishing prosperity and long life to the ruler of Travancore ! Years later, when we came home from college for the summer vacation, Ammachy would take us to visit our primary school teachers. The unspoken message was : Teachers deserve your respect.

We had three houses to be rented out, and made lasting friendships with our tenants. There were some cement benches in our court-yard, where the mothers sat down in the evenings and talked, while the children played kakku kali, kallu kali or hide-and seek, picked fruits from the champa and guava trees or played on the swing. No radio, no T.V !

When we were in Vellore many years later, I taught the sons of Dr. K.V.Johnny in Ida Scudder School. I told Johnny once that apart from his parents and the doctor, I was the first person to set eyes on him after he was born ! His parents were our tenants, too

For three years Munsif Gopala Pillai and his family lived as our tenants in 'Kizhake Veedu' Every evening Mrs. Pillai would come with her small children to relax and to chat. Years later, when she died, her son, an Engineer in Government Service, wrote to give us the news. He had been born in Thodupzha. He wrote that his mother always spoke about our family with respect and affection and he knew we would want to know that she was no more Journalist Pothen Philip's parents were also our tenants in 'Kizhakeveedu' for three years.

Mr & Mrs V.K. Chacko, who now live in Trivandrum, were our neighbours when he was the District Magistrate in Thodupuzha. Their sons, Thampan and Bevan, used to play with Reebe

and Samu, and roam around the compound helping, themselves to different varieties of guava and Champaka. They are both medical doctors in the United States now. When Thampan visited me recently he told me that he wished to work in a hospital in India for two months every year. The best of both worlds? I did not get the impression that his wife and children shared his enthusiasm. This seems to be a problem faced by several of the first generation of Indian doctors, scientists and computer engineers working in the United States. Most of them find the conditions in their places of work satisfactory-more or less. If the children are doing well in school, and the wife has got used to her work-schedule, why uproot them? There have been several cases of people who have returned to India to work, had bad experiences, and bitterly regretted their decision.

The Mar Thoma Church was close to where we lived. When Achens came from Perumpavoor or Keezhillom for a service there they used to arrive on Saturday and stay with us. All of us went to the Mar Thoma Church that Sunday. The Anglican Church was near the Malankara Estate, three miles from the town. The Anglican Achens I fondly remember are W.O. Oommen Achen, V.T. Kurien Achen, Mathan Achen and Thomas Cherian Achen who died recently. All of them were fine pastors.

After the service in the Anglican Church, we usually had lunch in the home of Mr. C.M. Thomas in the Malankara Estate. We were very good friends, and we always wondered if their decision to go and live in Ayroor when Mr. Thomas retired, was a wise one.

Kochumaria Cheduthi presided over our kitchen for 27 years. Her husband had walked out on her after the birth of a little girl, and nobody had heard of him, seen him, or missed him, after that. Annakutty, her daughter, stayed with us and went to school.

After Annakutty was married, her husband said he did not like the idea of his mother-in-law working in the kitchen of another family-So Kochumaria Cheduthi, who had become almost indispensable to us, had to leave us.

She was quite a character, always well-dressed and well-groomed. Nothing in and around the house escaped her eagle eye. Till 11 or 11.30, she would be here, there and everywhere, giving directions to her assistant or chatting with the men who were working in the compound. Around noon she would barge into the kitchen, put pans on three 'adups', do the grinding of cocoanut on the grinding stone and produce the most delicious food any of us had ever eaten, before or after! She served food to the workers in the compound, reminding them not to eat too much, that though the food was free, their stomachs could take in only so much !

After leaving us, she did not work anywhere else. One evening she saw an old man, with a walking stick in his hand, walking up to her house. She recognised him as the man who had walked out on her. She asked him if his marketing was over. From her tone and demeanour he must have realized that he was not welcome. He turned around and walked away.

It was always to Kochumaria Cheduthi that my brothers called out to find out if the hot water for their baths was ready (it always was) and if their clothes had been ironed (they always were). We used to complain that she was partial to the boys, that she always kept the best pieces of meat and fish for them. She did not deny it, but said that girls had better learn to adjust, very early in life, as, for women, life was just one long series of adjustments !

Ammachy was an aristocrat, -a tall, gracious and good-looking woman who won the admiration of everyone who met her or knew her. Kusumam Joseph, M.L.A. turned to her and confided in her whenever she needed a confidant. At her funeral Kusumam spoke with great feeling about the qualities of her head and heart, and ~~said~~ that she had ~~said~~ indeed lost a mother.

Ammachy had great sympathy for girls from lower middle-class families who were neither poor nor well-off. She started a candle-making unit for them and found a market for their products

in the large shops whose owners were known to her. If we left clothes in the cupboard to be worn the next time we went home, she would give them away to such girls, and tell us if we complained, that we had the money to buy some more, they did not. Two or three primary school children came to have lunch in our kitchen as their parents lived a long way off.

She started the first Kinder-garten school in Thodupuzha. She got girls who had been trained in the Baker Memorial kindergarten School in Kottayam and, if my memory serves me right, they stayed with us,

Ammachy's hospitality was well-known in Diocesan circles. Visitors from England to the Diocese were always taken to see one or the other of the hill parishes. They needed a place to rest, and have some tea and a wash on their way there. Ammachy provided all that. As children we used to be surprised at the large amount of hot tea they could consume !

Sometimes Achens, Catechists and their families, on their way to their parishes up in the hills, arrived at dusk and wanted hot baths before dinner. There was no tap water, no electric heater. The servants had to draw up water from the well, heat it and pour it into the copper vessels in the bath-room. One of those catechists, with a large family, spoke at her funeral with great feeling, stressing the point that she was not a snob.

We were very lucky in our parents. We never heard raised voices and loud arguments between them. I think Appachen greatly admired Ammachy and frequently sought her advice, which she gave him in an unobtrusive way.

Ammachy's death.

Ammachy died rather suddenly and unexpectedly on July 3rd 1979, just three days before her eighty-third birth-day. Writing to the family, Miss Dalton, a missionary - friend of many years

wrote : So the Lord has taken your Ammachy to celebrate her 83rd birth day with Him in heaven. 'That thought comforted us in our grief over the death of a wonderful mother and grandmother.

On July 4th she woke up at 3 o' clock in the morning with pain and discomfort in the chest, and was admitted in a private clinic the next day. She assured us that she did not have unbearable pain.

By mid-night it was clear to those who were at her bed-side that death was not far away. When she knew that death was imminent, she looked at the half-a-dozen women friends from the parish standing at the foot of her bed and told them she was going away. She called my brother Koch and Sarakutty and thanked them for being good to her. Then she looked at her niece, Thankamma from Perumpavoor and at me, and gently closed her eyes. And while the people around her were singing 'Nearer my God to Thee' her soul left her body to be with her Lord and Master whom she had loved so dearly and served so faithfully. What a beautiful way to leave this world !

I often think of our mother who had a wonderful recipe for happiness in life - contentment with what we have and gratitude to God for all that He has given us.

Chapter 5

Boarding School Days (1927-1933)

When we were school girls, the only Government High School for girls was in Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore State. There were three Christian boarding-schools for girls in Central Travancore. The Baker Memorial School for girls in Kottayam (Anglican) the Nicholson School for girls (Mar Thoma) and Balikamadam. (Orthodox) Thiruvella. Though the Baker Memorial School maintained high academic standards, its boarding section was not very

satisfactory, and well-to-do parents preferred to send their daughters to the Nicholson School or to the Balikamadam ,Thiruvella.

In the early years of this century, when my mother and her sister were boarders in the Baker Memorial School, the boarding fee was two rupees a month. It was not a pittance then. The children of church workers like pastors, catechists and teachers were exempted from paying even that. When my mother and her sister were boarders there, they were expected to collect cow-dung from the cow-sheds and apply it to the floor of the rooms in the school and the boarding section ! Fortunately there were 'experts' among them to do the collecting for the timid ones who were scared of the huge cows. Today it seems surprising that the parents, many of whom were well-to-do, put up with such chores. But I think that was an era when any sort of questioning of authority was taboo, and Miss Baker owned the school, after all !

When we were in boarding schools in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, we too had some chores, like sweeping, dusting, keeping the school garden trim, and serving food in the dining-room. I have a feeling that our parents rather liked the idea of our having such chores in boarding school !

After four years in a nearby Primary school, most girls from our extended family were sent to the Nicholson School to join what was then called Preparatory Class. It was in that class that we began the study of English. If my memory serves me right, our History, Geography and Arithmetic texts were also in simple English, not Malayalam. That must be why our vocabulary increased quickly and we were able to read books written in English. Elizabeth Mathai, who later married Rev. K.N Oommen, was English. our English Teacher.

Though the Nicholson School belonged to the Mar Thoma Church, it seemed to be managed by two English women, Miss Ward and Miss Viney. I doubt if they had any special qualifications like University degrees or teaching experience, unlike Miss

Brooke-Smith of Balikamadam, a school for Orthodox girls. She was a well-qualified teacher with several years of teaching experience.

Miss Viney's 'strength' was music. Miss Ward seemed to have an elementary knowledge of first-aid and you went to her in the mornings if you had a bad cold and cough, a sore thumb or if you had hurt your toe or knee. They lived in great comfort in well-furnished rooms and had several servants-a cook, a turbaned butler and a woman to do the sweeping, and washing of clothes. For people from middle-class families in England, it must indeed have been a life of luxury.

On Thursday nights, after evening prayers were over, Miss Ward would open a note-book and, with a stern and solemn look she would put on her glasses, and read out the names of those who had 'disgraced themselves' getting more than three 'bad marks' that week. Bad marks were given by prefects for innocuous offences like whispering to your neighbour asking for help during study hour. You did not disturb anyone but rules were rules ! I remember getting a bad mark once for jumping down from the verandah to pick up something I had dropped into the court-yard, instead of sedately going down the steps ! Conversation was forbidden in the dining room, where we had to sit on very long, low 'kurandies' (very low wooden seats) The teachers sat on chairs at tables in the same room. If you wanted salt, you raised your hand, I don't believe we could ask for or get water to drink ! Decorum and 'adakkam othukkam' were very important for girls !

Years later I asked Mrs Ittyerah why on earth she and her colleagues had not objected to such primitive and unfair rules and regulations and punishment out of all proportion to the 'crime' ! After all these years I still have strong feelings about those 'bad marks'. The Salt March led by Gandhiji must have been the first occasion when a group of people in this country raised their voice against people in authority.

in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the total annual expenses per student in a Christian boarding school came to about a hundred rupees, but at that time that was a lot of money. The boarding fee alone came to only six or seven rupees a month! We did not get coffee in the morning, nor tea after school. We must have drunk a lot of water! I think at that time everybody, including parents, thought that if you had lived a spartan life when you were young, you were prepared for any kind of life later. One of the blessings of boarding school life was the life-long friendships we made there—Equally valuable is the habit of reading a passage from the Bible or from a devotional book before going to sleep, and early in the morning. 'The Imitation of Christ' 'Come Ye Apart' and 'In Green Pastures' were three popular devotional books. We also learned to do needle work. We did not like it at the time, but it came in handy later on, and today I am the one who does the darning and the repairing of clothes in the family!

When I finished Form II in the Nicholson School, I told Appachen that I wanted to leave that school and join Mahilalayam, a new school in Alwaye. Today I cannot remember how and from whom I had heard about that new school and why I thought that life there would be better than in the Nicholson School.

Appachen was a sport, a very understanding kind of person. He did not want to know why I wanted a change when my sister, and a few cousins, seemed to be quite happy in the Nicholson School. When he wrote to Mr. T.K. Kuruvilla, the Head-master, asking for my transfer certificate, he wrote back asking him if he would not reconsider his decision to take me out of the school. He said that he did not want to lose a bright student like me!

The years in the Christava Mahilalayam, Alwaye (1931-1933)

The Christava Mahilalayam, Alwaye, to which I have a strong emotional attachment to this day, did not belong to, or have the support of, any particular denomination of the Church in Kerala. On its Governing Board there have always been representatives of the various non-Catholic Churches in Kerala.

Seventy years ago people in the 'northern' areas like Parur, Ayyampalli, Trichur, Kunnamkulam, Angamali, Nedumpasseri etc. were inclined to be rather conservative, and did not think it necessary, or even desirable, to educate girls beyond a certain level-Getting them 'married off' into a well-to-do family was their only goal for them !

Mr. A A. Paul and Mr. P.K. Mathew were two people from that area who had other ideas about the education of girls. But for their vision and grit, there would have been no Mahilalayam, and what a loss that would have been for North Travancore !

The Mahilalayam School was started in 1927 with about forty girls and half a dozen teachers in the C.M.S. Bungalow in Alwaye town, while a 'nalukettu' school building was being built on the top of a hill in Thottumugham, three miles from Alwaye town, on the Main Central Road.

The first Principal of this new school was Sarah Chacko, the daughter of Mr. M A. Chacko, Excise Commissioner of Cochin State. He too was keen on the idea of having a Christian school for girls in the northern area. Miss Chacko stayed only for a year, just to give the school a good start. She became Principal of Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow and died suddenly, of a heart attack, while she was playing tennis.

Miss. Chacko was followed by Miss Stevens of the Women's Christian College, Madras. who came just for a year.

Then, in the providence of God, Hester Smith from England, who had come to India with a desire to work in an Indian school, met Mr. A A. Paul in Madras, and he told her about this new school that had been started in Alwaye in the West coast. She wondered if that was the opening she had been waiting for. She was 33, had a B Sc degree from the University of London, and her own financial resources-Mr. Paul suggested that she should go and see the new school in Alwaye in December, 1930.

The school building that she saw was unplastered and unfinished. A hall and class-rooms were built round the four sides of a court-yard, with a rain tree in the middle. She walked out onto the bare hill-top and fell in love with the breath-taking view that was spread out before her eyes miles and miles of what looked like a green forest stretched to the foot of the Western Ghats. Mr. Mathew took her round the school estate and showed her the rubber trees he had planted in the valleys, and a few cashewnut trees; but otherwise the hill-top was barren except for a few shrubs here and there.

In the providence of God, and to the good fortune of generations of girls she later taught, H. S. decided to throw in her lot with this new school. And she proved to be, in Mr. P.K. Mathew's words, 'God's gift to Christava Mahilalayam'. I joined the school as a 12-year-old in the last year of the Lower School, the Third Form. Hester Smith taught us English and Nature-Study. Her Nature-Study classes were usually held out-of-doors when she took us for 'nature-walks'. After all these years, I can still remember her pointing out that the shrubs on the hill-top had thick, hairy leaves to conserve water, whereas down in the valley abutting the paddy fields the plants had large, smooth leaves as they did not have to conserve water. Students do not forget what they learn in this way.

Hester Smith took a special interest in the Anglican girls in the school. On Sunday morning we went with her to the Anglican Church in Alwaye in an open boat (vallom) down the Periyar river. As the return journey was quite hot, the hardier ones (I was not one of them!) preferred to walk back in the hot sun. She had confirmation classes for T.A. Anna, Catherine Samuel and me. It was from her that we learned what the foundations of our faith were. Our confirmation by Bishop Moore was in the school chapel in 1931, and my god-father, Uncle T.N. Kurien, came from Kottayam in the Bishop's car.

It was in the Mahilalayam that most of us got to know how people of other denominations worshipped. Every evening, while

the Jacobites chanted their evening prayers in one room, the Anglicans and Marthomites had their singing of hymns, Bible-reading, and prayers in another room. On Sunday mornings all of us attended whatever service there was in the chapel. Sometimes a Mar Thoma Achen came from Perumpavoor, the next Sunday it could be the Anglican Achen from Alwaye town, and the following Sunday it could be a Jacobite Kurbana. We were not aware of the differences between the Jacobites and the Orthodox. We vaguely knew that there was a case going on, and anyway, their prayers were the same. Nobody talked about ecumenism, but I believe it was practised in that school.

Every morning, before school started and classes began, we had prayers in the chapel. The non-Christian girls said their prayers in the hall and one of the teachers took part in that. The boarders had Bible-reading and prayers early in the morning in the chapel and one of the teachers explained the ideas in the Bible passage we had read.

When we were in the Fourth Form (Grade 8) the 'good' students in our class were chosen to write a Government Scholarship Examination. There were three papers. English, Malayam, and Arithmetic. To my great surprise, I won that scholarship of five rupees a month. Today five rupees is a small amount but at that time, boys paid only five rupees a month as school fees, and girls three and a half rupees. Appachen was so thrilled that he came to the school with a large tin of 'English' lozenges for me to distribute among the students! A large tin of lozenges 'made in 'England' cost only two and a half rupees then !

We were very fortunate in our teachers. Sosamma Daniel, who taught us English and Geography, may not have been an exciting teacher, but she was a thorough one, and we held her in high esteem. Years later, when I taught in the school as her colleague, and wished to consult her on a tricky point in English grammar, she usually had an answer ready, but always liked to check it with an old, tattered grammar-book by Sonnetshaun, who

ever he was ! When she was not teaching, she sat in the Bursar's office and handled the finances of the school. It was difficult to extract money from her even to buy a copper vessel for the hostel ! But for her, Mahilalayam, always plagued by financial problems, would not have survived.

Mariamamma Mathew, wife of Mr. P.K Mathew, was Mariamma Isaac when she joined the teaching staff of the Mahilalayam after graduating from the Women's Christian College, Madras. She was our Maths teacher, and alas ! I did not have a mathematical brain. I could never figure out when and where two trains travelling at different speeds in opposite directions, would cross each other. I felt that it should be the head-ache of railway officials ! Considering the recent increase in the number of train accidents, I think that it is a pity that the railway men involved did not have a Mariamma Kochamma to teach them !

On finding out by accident that there were two or three ay-p students who did not bring their lunch to school, nor go home for it she told them to go to her house and have a meal there. No fare, no fuss. Just a kind reaction from a generous heart.

How can I ever forget that in my final year in school, during the evening study hour she would come to the school, summon me from the class-room with a flick of her finger, and make me sit with her in the library to work at my mathematics ? where do you find teachers like her now ?

Many years later, on hearing that she had been admitted in the Angamali Hospital with failing kidneys, I rushed to her bedside. She recognised me, but it was clear that the end was near. I waited on the verandah outside with Davy, her son and my student, till she breathed her last.

Chachy Samuel (Mrs. P.J. Thomas) was our History teacher. It was quite clear to her students that she loved her subject. I have

sometimes thought that I opted for History as an optional subject in school and later in the Intermediate course in college, partly because she made it a fascinating subject. There was no subject that Mr. P.N. Ninan could not teach. I saw him several years later in the Devalokam Aramana, the headquarters of the Church, where he must have made himself indispensable by his efficiency and total loyalty to the church.

Elamma Kochamma was our Biology teacher. She loved everyone and everyone loved her. She was warm, affectionate, and uncomplicated, the kind of person Jesus must have had in mind when he said that we should all become like children. Her visits to the sick-room made girls who were ill and low in spirits, feel better. I know that every one of the girls she has taught will remember her with warm and deep affection.

Some time in the nineteen-forties, the school found itself in dire financial straits and there was talk of closing it down. Mr K. C. Chacko had a meeting of concerned friends in his house, and the people gathered there discussed ways and means of helping to put the school on firm foundations again. Mrs. Ittyerah, Mrs. Thomas and I volunteered to go and teach there three days a week.

In 1948 when K C J was travelling all over the country to collect a Silver Jubilee fund for U.C. College, I stayed in one of the cottages in the school with three-year-old Samu. Since Reebe did not like the local primary school, I sent her to stay with my parents in Thodupuzha, where she went to primary school.

Later Reebe and Samu went to school in Mahilalayam. Ammu too would have, if we had not gone to Ethiopia in September, 1960. One of the blessings of having been a teacher in a good Christian school in that era is the warm relationships formed there between the teacher and the taught. When Davy and Maimie came here recently with their son and daughter-in-law, I was very happy. We talked about the late Thomas Abraham, General Manager of

FACT, who had been his class-mate in Mahilalayam I told Davy that many years ago he had come running up to me in the Kottayam bus-stand to tell me 'Kochamma, I just want to tell you that after you taught me, English in the Second Form, nobody else has taught me any English. I was sad to hear about his relatively early death not long ago. Here, in Bangalore, Ammini Thomas, now Mrs T. J. S. George, an old student, rings me up occasionally and visits me when Omana, her sister, comes for a visit from Trivandrum

We take the State Transport School bus from the town for granted now. Who remembers that many years ago Hester Smith sat in the waiting room of the office of The State Transport Minister, E. John Philipose, like the importunate widow, till she got the permit. ? When Mahilalayam celebrated its Golden Jubilee, Hester Smith paid one last visit to Alwaye This was the tribute I paid her at a gathering of her Old Students.

'The evening of life is a time for reflections and going back in time. What have we done with our lives? Have we brightened dark areas, dispelled ignorance, and broken down the walls of prejudice and hate somewhere ? As you ponder over your years in India, you need have no regrets. As a teacher you never said the harsh words that hurt and humiliated, nor did you condemn or reject any of the little ones entrusted to your care. That is why today many of us rise and call you blessed. In the years that lie ahead, may God grant you Heaven's most valued treasures of peace and happiness that you so richly deserve. And may it be your joy to hear, at the end, the wonderful words of the Lord whom you have loved and served : 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'

Some years later she wrote to me that she had been deeply moved by what I had said on behalf of her old students, and colleagues and occasionally re-read the magazine in which it had been published, when she felt a little low in spirits. When she died, Mr & Mrs. T.B. Thomas were staying in England with Annu, their daughter, At the funeral service, Mr. Thomas preached the sermon and told the congregation about her contribution to the field of the education of girls in our part of the world

Two Years in Ernakulam (1933-1935)

Appachen tended to have sudden brain-waves In 1933 I had finished school and was ready for college. My older sister, Thanku, had passed her Intermediate course(a strange name given to the two- year course between school and the degree classes) Kunjoonj had finished what was called Lower School, and there was no High School in Thodupuzha. Appachen calculated that if the entire family moved to Ernakulam for two years, all of us could continue our studies from home, and that would work out cheaper than sending us to, hostels.

Once his mind was made up, Appachen did not dither. He went to Ernakulam and met Chakyatu Narayana Menon, Uncle M.P. Jacob's friend. Mr. Menon found for him a two storied house in Valanjambalam, near the present South Railway Station and the bus-stand, for a monthly rent of twenty rupees. I think our house was where the Medical Trust Hospital stands now. A rickshaw man charged only four annas for the trip from there to Broadway. Once a week the 'Sreeman' bus would bring coconuts, vegetables, and banana bunches from our compound in Thodupuzha, where Kariachettan, a faithful retainer, was in charge. Transport was free as the owner of the bus was Appachen's friend!

We had a superb cook-Chacko. The only snag about him was that when he went to the market to make purchases for the kitchen, he would often get involved in some mishap or the other, and Appachen would have to go and bail him out and get the bicycle back !

A little later we moved into a more spacious house in a large compound in Karikkamuri Road, a very quiet road at that time. There was a big pond in the compound where our servants used to wash clothes and kitchen utensils. At that time Ernakulam was not the large, congested town it has now become and such ponds were to be found in most large compounds in coastal towns like Alleppey, Cochin, Ernakulam, Shertalla etc.

Ammachy was very happy in Ernakulam. She was on the Y.W. C.A. committee, and made many friends. We had many house-guests there; some came to write University examinations, others came in search of jobs. When her aunt Mrs. C.K. Mathai came on a visit, she showed Ammachy how to bake a cake in an improvised oven. The cake-mixture was poured into a small aluminium pan lined with greased paper and that was put in to a larger flat-bottomed vessel with hot sand in it. The lid of the large vessel had on it burning coconut husks. Then it was put on the warm adup. It sounds complicated, doesn't it? But it was not, and that was the only way we could eat home-made cakes! Bakeries, of course, sold cakes, and people could buy them there. Ammachy's cakes were delicious, and when we were children, we had plenty of home-made cake to eat at tea-time.

In those days shops were full of things 'Made in Japan', and they were cheaper than things 'Made in England'. From a shop in Broadway, Appachen bought a Japanese striking clock for eight rupees. It is still on the wall of our home in Thodupuzha as an antique! For eight rupees he bought a Japanese ice-cream-maker. My brother, Kunjoon, would ride his bicycle all the way to a factory owned by the Tatas at the other end of town to buy the ice, and the rest of us enjoyed taking turns to turn the handle. There was no other way we could eat ice-cream! It was not available in shops, and no one had refrigerators.

Even after we returned to Thodupuzha after staying in Ernakulam for two years, the ice-cream-making continued during the holidays because the friendly conductor of the Sreeman bus, Ganeshan, who was very fond of us, used to take the trouble to bring ice from Ernakulam, packed in a sack full of saw-dust.

Around this time Appachen gave us a surprise. He bought a car with a dicky-seat from an English-man in Alleppey who was going back to England for good. We felt conspicuous in it because of its unusual shape, but he enjoyed driving it around and had a

minor mishap or two, but most of the time he seemed to be taking it apart with the help of a friendly black-smith. I cannot remember him ever going for a driving test !

Saturdays were beggars' days. Half an anna or one chakram to those who came from 'paandi' (Tamilnadu) saying there was a famine there. There were a few regulars who expected, and got a 'kanji' meal at noon. I am told that the only beggars in Kerala now, are from Tamilnadu. Most people put a chakram into the collection bag in Church on Sunday mornings. Today we think nothing of putting a five rupee or ten-rupee note into the collection bag on a Sunday.

St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam (1933-35)

Sixty-five years ago, when I joined what was then called the Intermediate class, in St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, it was just an apology for a college. I could not get admission in the Maharaja's College for Group II (Physics, Chemistry, Biology,) because that year the Government of Cochin State decided not to admit students from Travancore State. I could not join the Women's Christian College, Madras, because they would not admit anyone below sixteen, and I was only fifteen when I finished school.

St. Teresa's College had only the Third Group-Ancient History, (Greek and Roman) Modern History (British !) and Logic. At that time bright students who were good in Mathematics used to opt for Group I (Maths, Physics, Chemistry.) Students who were not too good in Maths but had no problems with Science subjects, used to opt for Group II (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), People used to look slightly surprised when I said I had chosen III Group because very few bright students used to opt for the Third Group. At that time people had the same attitude to Economics. Today if you have a degree in Economics from St. Stephen's College Delhi, you can make it to the top in private companies, as Salil, my nephew, has done.

Our English teacher, Sister Bernard, was from Mangalore. While returning our first written assignment, she wanted to know who Anna Poonnen was. I stood up, wondering what on earth I had done wrong ! She called me to her and told me *sotto voce* that impressed by my first written assignment, she had consulted her colleagues, and they had decided that I should be advised to switch from Malayalam to French as my Second Language ! She pointed out that I could easily get distinction marks (60% and above) in French and that would ensure a First class for me. When I told my parents what Sister Bernard had said, they asked me to follow her advice, as she must know what she was talking about. That is how French became my Second Language. Years later, when we lived in Geneva, that switch-over to French helped me to speak it fairly fluently.

While all this was going on, the half a dozen Cochin Anglo-Indians in our class, with a superiority complex, had already started their French lessons with Sister Theodore. On my first day in the French class, they looked at me as if they wondered what this girl in 'mundu and chatta' was doing in the French class. This supercilious attitude vanished after Sister Theodore returned the first test paper. I had scored 95 out of 100, and all of them trailed way behind! After that they began to come to me for help.

When the results of the University examination were published, my number was among those who had passed in the First Class. I had scored distinction marks (60% and above) in all subjects except Logic ! And Logic was supposed to be a subject in which it was easy to get a distinction !

When Uncle Kurien showed my mark-list to Mr. P.C. Joseph, of the C.M.S College he told him that a distinction in English was an outstanding achievement and I should definitely do the B.A (Honours) course in English Literature in the Presidency College, Madras- Mr. V. K. Aiyappan Pillai, who was Professor

of English there, happened to be in Kottayam, his home town, then. When Uncle Kurien took my mark-list to him, he too said that it was a rare achievement and it would be a pleasure to admit me to the English Honours course in the Presidency College.

And it was no small achievement, as we learned later. At that time all the colleges in South India were affiliated to the Madras University- Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. I had scored 121 marks out of 200 and distinction marks (60% and above) in English were very rare. Marking of examination papers has become more liberal, I think, and students, now seem to score higher marks than in our days.

I am sorry to say that the nuns at St. Teresa's College just ignored my achievement and did not write to me saying that they were pleased about it. The Registrar of the University (an English-man) traced me to the Presidency College and Queen Mary's College Hostel. The Principal of Queen Mary's College, Miss De la Hey, (an English woman who had no idea who I was) called me to her office and handed over to me the Kirupabhai Satyanadha Memorial medal- and that was it !

I think the nuns in St. Teresa's College just could not accept the fact that a non- Catholic girl had won that medal, and not their favourite bright student, Sybil Correiah, an Anglo-Indian and a Roman Catholic. I am sure that if she had won it, they would have given it to her on College Day and made a big occasion of it. Actually the Sisters were quite fond of me, or so I thought. But I think they found it hard to recognise and acknowledge the achievement of a non-Catholic.

The years in Queen Mary's College Hostel (1935-1938)

As the Presidency College did not have a hostel for women students in the nineteen-thirties, we stayed in the Queen Mary's

College hostel. The name has now been changed to Rani Maria Kalalayam by promoters of Tamil-In our days there was a college bus in the morning to take us to the Presidency College and to bring us back in the evening. The bus-fare was four annas (twenty-five paise) per trip. Science students, who had irregular hours, hired rickshaws drawn by men, and shared the fare of four annas.

My Anglo-Indian friend, Hilda Trindade, from Vizagapatnam, could not afford even four annas, and would walk along the marina, and the cooling sea breeze was very refreshing. Some years later she wrote to tell me that she was going to be a nun. We met again in 1974 when she came for training in Counselling at the Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore, when we were there. She used to write to me at Christmas but since I have not heard from her for some years, I fear she is dead.

We were about a dozen Syrian Christians in the Queen Mary's College Hostel. Of them, Grace Lukose, Annie Kurien, Thankamma Cherian, Mary Poonnen (My sister) Mrs. M. M. Thomas and Mary Samuel, are dead. Thankam Matthan, Grace Cherian and I live in Bangalore. Cookie is in Madras, and her cousin, Maya, is in Aymanaim. Anna Mani, who used to work in the Raman Institute here, is not very well now and lives with her sister, Chella, in Trivandrum. Chella too was in Q M C with us and took a degree in Chemistry. I was glad to see Susie Tharakan the other day after many years. We are all ageing and face the problems that advancing years bring with them.

In the Queen Mary's College Hostel there were four 'sections' for food. The mess fee in the European section was around twenty-five rupees, a lot of money at that time. Those who joined that section, mostly Mangalorean Christians, Anglo-Indians, and a handful of Syrian Christians, ate with fork and spoon and were served by turbaned butlers!

Conservative Brahmins had their meals in the Brahmin section. They (or their parents) had the satisfaction that food there was cooked and served by Brahmins. They sat on low wooden stools to have their meals which were served on banana leaves. Non Brahmins were not allowed even to set foot in that 'Section.'

Most Syrian Christians had their food in the 'Tamil-Telugu' non-vegetarian section. The cooks were Nairs from Palghat. We could sit on benches and the food was served on tables. After a month of having my food there, I switched over to the Cosmopolitan section. There the food was vegetarian, we had to sit on low 'kurandies', and the sambar aviyal menu went on and on, but I had no problem with that. The food was cooked and served by Nairs from Palghat, and we never paid more than fifteen rupees a month for it.

The Years in Presidency College, Madras (1935-38)

I joined the English Honours course in the Presidency College, Madras, in June, 1935. That was more than sixty years ago. There were more women than men in our batch. When we came to live in Bangalore in 1979, I discovered that two of my classmates (G. Ramanathan and G. Divakaran) were also living here. I enjoyed meeting them now and then and talking about our days in the Presidency College. They are no more, and I miss them.

When we were students in the Presidency College, Mr. Papworth, an Englishman, was the Principal and Head of the English Department. He seldom came to teach us and when he did come, once in a while, to take a Shakespeare class, we discovered that his histrionic talent was superior to his teaching ability!

Mr. V.K. Aiyappan Pillai was a sedate, dignified Keralite from Kottayam, who seldom smiled, but he did a thorough job of teaching us Old English and the History of the English Language. MRR, a conservative Tamil Brahmin, and dressed like one, was a good teacher, if a bit dull and prosaic.

It was very obvious to us that Professor K. Swaminathan (whose obituary I read in **The Hindu** a few years ago) loved and enjoyed the enchanting poetry of the Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley, and he managed to pass on some of his enjoyment to his students. The more excited he became, the more he pulled at his hair. He never stood up while teaching, and I am not sure if he was very good from an examination point of view, but that hardly mattered. The sheer love and enjoyment of the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats that 'Swami' passed on to generations of his students, was his precious legacy.

Twice a week we went to the Madras Christian College, Esplanade to attend lectures there by Macphail, Macnicol and Boyd, all Scottish missionaries, and Gordon Mathews, a prosaic Englishman. From the Christian College, English Honours and Post-graduate students came to the Presidency College twice a week. This arrangement came to an end when the Christian College moved to Tambaram. I remember going to Tamnaram with friends while the college and the hostel buildings were being built. All three of my brothers later took their degrees from there.

I shall always be grateful to Mr. Swaminathan and Mr. Aiyappan Pillai for their help in an infortunate incident that could have ended up with serious consequences for me. In those days the women students of the Presidency College wrote their University examinations in Queen Mary's College, along with the students of that college. The Presidency College students sat on the stage. My Syrian Christian friends in the hostel would stand on an upper verandah and wait for me to go through the question paper. If I smiled and nodded, they would go away, relieved. Wasn't that nice of them?

Then one day disaster struck. When I went to my desk I found or two or three blank sheets left. Over from the day before, and among them was the last answer-sheet I had written on. I panicked and began to sob. The Supervisor realized that if

there was an enquiry, her failure to clear the desks the day before would come out. She accused me of taking out an answer-book the previous day, writing on it, and bringing it back the next day! I was very upset and in tears. My Syrian Christian friends on the upper verandah urged me to stop sobbing and pay attention to that day's paper.

It took me a while to settle down and tackle the General Essay paper- Just one essay, and three hours in which to plan and write it. The topic I chose was 'The disparity between spelling and pronunciation in the English Language.' After all these years I can still remember the excitement and enthusiasm with which I wrote that essay. The disparity between spelling and pronunciation in the English language had always intrigued me and I was pleased with the essay I wrote. Since my essay was only seventeen pages long I had plenty of time to make a fair copy. The sight of my class-mates, Yolande Desouza and Shanmugha Sundaram, writing away, full of self-confidence, made me wonder if my seventeen page essay was inadequate.

However, as things turned out, it was that very seventeen-page General Essay that got me the first rank in the University. When I went to Mr. Swaminathan's house with my friends, Anna Mani and Elizabeth Kurien, to tell him about the incident he told us that he had already heard about it. He said that the vindictive supervisor had reported to the Registrar of the University that I had taken a blank answer-book home, written on it, brought it back the next day, and then complained that it had been overlooked by the supervisor. He told us that the University Registrar, an Englishman, had called an urgent meeting of the Senate just to settle the issue. To my good fortune Mr. Swaminathan and Mr. Aiyyappan Pillai were both in the Senate and were able to convince the other members of the Senate that Miss Poonnen was not the type of person who would try such a trick for a paltry five or six marks. If any, that the answer-book would have brought her I shudder to think what could have happened if they had not done that. Swami said that after the results of the examination were published, they had told the other members of the Senate at a meeting that the

Miss. Poonnen who had got the first rank in the University and won two gold medals, was the person the invigilator had accused of cheating. At the ensuing convocation I got those two gold medals from the Governor.

Miss. De Lahey, a dignified English woman, was the Principal of Queen Mary's College when we were there. She was a practising Christian and though QMC was a Government College, she had set apart a room in the hostel for Christian worship in the evenings. She never failed to get there by 8 p.m. to lead the worship. Two students could sign up to go with her in her car for worship in St. Mathais Church on Sunday mornings. I doubt if such things can happen in a Government College today.

In 1944, six years after I had left the Presidency College, I was staying with my parents with Reebe, a baby in arms, when two police-men from the Madras Police Department came to see me. How they managed to trace me to that small town in Kerala, eight years after I had left the Presidency College, I have no idea.

They told me that the Head-Clerk of the Presidency College Office, who had been there for several years, had at last been caught with his hand in the till. The College had several prizes for meritorious students who had done well in the University Examination. The college authorities had just left it to the Head-Clerk to trace the prize-winners who, by then had left the college, and tell them to collect their prizes from the college office ! A typical bureaucratic, uncaring attitude in a government college ! I had won two prizes.

The Policemen told me that all I had to do was to appear before a magistrate in the Egmore court to identify the man. I told them that with a small baby on my hands I would not be able to travel to Madras. They replied that the Government of Madras was willing to pay First Class railway-fare for me and my mother to travel to Madras with Reebe, the baby. We stayed with the Kuru-villa Jacob's. At the Egmore magistrate's court, I had to take an

oath that I would speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I also had to look at the culprit and identify him as the Head clerk of the Presidency College when I was a student there. And that was it !

I cannot remember if, how, and from whom I collected the two money prizes !

How I missed a First Class

Students who did the B.A. (Honours) course in English Literature had to face a panel of examiners after they had marked our papers-a **Viva Voce** or oral examination. In 1938 only three colleges in the Madras University had this course- Presidency College and Madras Christian College in Madras and the Arts College in Trivandrum. After the examiners had valued our papers we had to return to Madras for this **Viva Voce** examination. As I was going in to face this august, but sensitive body of unimintimidating. Professors, I heard one of them say, 'This is Miss. Poonnen who wrote that language essay'.

It must have been obvious to that group of men that I was nervous and they did their best to put me at my ease. I was asked what I thought of the idea of writing Indian languages in the Latin script I was very nervous, and must have given a stupid answer. I failed to help that august body of friendly men to help me! Fortunately students did not lose marks in the viva voce-

Later, Mr. E.T. Thomas, who had come from Trivandrum told me (after tracing my ancestry!) that I was only eleven marks short of first class marks. He wanted to know why I had not said something, anything! They were all keen to help me, but I refused to be helped, he said - I suppose a Second Class was all I deserved ! It was considered good enough then. Fortunately I got the first rank in the University, and the two gold medals I got at the Convocation were a pleasant surprise.

Chapter VI

My First Job—Sarah Tucker College, Palayamcotta

Though I had taken a B. A. (Honours) degree in English Language and Literature, securing the first rank in the University and winning two gold medals. I had to cool my heels at home for a while before getting a job. At that time people with Honours and M. A. degrees looked for jobs only in Colleges - But there were only three or four colleges in the entire State of Travancore and, all of them, except the Government Women's College, Trivandrum, were colleges for men

Then one day I saw an advertisement in a newspaper for the post of a Lecturer in English in Sarah Tucker College for Women in Palayamcottah, Tinnevelly District, Tamil Nad I sent an application and was offered the job on a salary of seventy-eight rupees a month ! Why not eighty, we wondered !

I travelled, all by myself, to Palayamcottah From Thodupuza I took a bus to Kottayam There I got into a bus for Trivandrum, got off the bus at Kottarakkara, and walked two miles in the hot sun to the railway station followed by a coolie carrying my suit-case Or was it a steel trunk? A friendly, helpful Station master in Kottarakkara told me I would have to change trains at Shencottah, Tenkasi and Tinnevelly! He told me that at Palayamcottah I should ask the station-master for help. At Palayamcottah the station-master called the driver of an ox - cart and told him to take me to Sarah Tucker College. I suppose life was generally safer in those days. I was just twenty years old.

It did not take me very long to discover that the Principal of the College, Nina Hewitt, was an obnoxious character-the haughty, overbearing type of missionary who looked down on Indians and knew what was good Enough for them We did not have that type of missionary in Travancore, probably because we were not boot-licking, kow-towing people. The Tamilian teachers in Sarah Tucker School in the same grounds, did not seem to mind this

attitude because they were used to it. It was this peaceful state of affairs that was disturbed by the arrival of three young women from Travancore—Rachel Verghese, Anna Poonnen and Beatrice Rose, to teach in the college. We resented the fact that after each meal, we had to march past the three English women having their meals served by turbaned butlers, to wash our plates in a sink in the adjoining room. We did not think there was anything degrading about dish-washing and we had done it in boarding schools. What irked us was that it was one rule for them and another for us.

Within a week we had hired a girl to clear our table and to do the washing up. For our pains we were summoned to Miss Heuit's bungalow, made to stand in the court-yard while she stood, up on the verandah. There, red in face with anger, she berated us for our innovation. 'If everybody else can wash their plates, why can't you?' she wanted to know. 'It is not as if everybody washes plates, you don't,' we countered. 'But, but, I am the Principal of this institution,' she thundered. We came away, nonplussed, unable to understand her logic.

After this unpleasant encounter, we just ignored her, continued to employ the girl to wash up, and generally managed to have a good time. Later on we decided to have our food in a room near the kitchen and had no more encounters with Nina Hewitt. I joined the local Ladies' Club and played tennis there in the evenings.

In September, 1939 I was playing tennis with Miss. Holdsworth, a harmless, non controversial English woman, on the College tennis court, when someone shouted that England had declared war on Germany. She stopped playing, excused herself and left the court, looking upset, and wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.

The Bishop of Tinnevely at that time was Bishop Stephen Neill, a man with a brilliant mind. I read his books, but cannot

help remembering that he too seemed to have a 'superior' attitude to Indians I have seen that attitude among American and English missionaries in different parts of India, but not in Keralas.

The Student Christian Conference in Varkala (1938)

In those days the Student Christian Movement was active in most non-Catholic Christian Colleges. The S.C.M. Secretary for Kerala was Mr. K.A. Mathew, with his headquarters in Trivandrum. He visited the branches of the S.C.M. in the various colleges and kept in touch with the staff and students. At the S.C.M. conference in Varkala, he made an appeal to people with time to help with the famine-relief work in Shertallai and surrounding areas in the coastal belt of Travancore. It was from that area that British companies in Alleppey had bought coir to weave coir-mats to be exported to England. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the export of coir-mats came to an end and that meant unemployment, starvation and famine in the coastal areas of Travancore. Youth Christian Council of Action volunteers went from house to house in Shertallai and its environs to collect information, and published a Souvenir and distributed the money collected to deserving families. The people involved in this project were Rev. M. A. Thomas, Mrs. M. M. Thomas, K. K. Chandy, V. K. Alexander and V. T. Chandapilla. E. V. Mathew and I brought out a special issue of the Arunodayam magazine to give the general public some idea of the tragic situation in that area.

A Vain Trip to Delhi (1939)

While I was teaching in Sarah Tucker College, Palayamcottah, someone brought to my notice an advertisement in a newspaper for the post of a Lecturer in English in the Indraprastha College for Women in Delhi. To this day I do not know why I applied for that job! I had got over the initial frustration and anger against Nina Hewitt and had settled down to life in the college with some good colleagues like Beatrice Rose and Rachel Verghese. When I was called to Delhi for an interview, I just assumed I would get the job. So did my friends. I took off by train to New

Delhi. No one told me that I should not resign the job in Sara Tucker College before making sure about the job in Delhi. In Delhi I stayed in the hostel of the Lady Harding Medical College for women.

When I managed to get to the Indraprastha College in Old Delhi by tonga, I met Mrs Pillai who was on the staff of St. Teresa's College when I was a student there. She told me that the advertisement was just a formality as they had already decided to take a Bengali. Since it was no use crying over spilt milk, I took tourist trips to see the sights of Delhi and Agra, including the Taj Mahal.

When I returned to Thodupuzha and cooled my heels there, no one blamed me. Fortunately the family was not dependent on my income.

A Short Stay in Bethel Ashram, Thiruvella (1939)

Sister Rachel Joseph of the Bethel Ashram, Thiruvella, was a remarkable person. She and my mother had been friends and classmates in the Baker Memorial School in Kottayam. When she visited us in Thodupuzha on her way to Melukavu, she suggested that my cousin, Koch (Mrs. T.B. Benjamin) and I should go and stay in the Bethel Ashram for a while. We did that and I believe both of us benefited from that experience. Life was spartan, but we learned a great deal. Sister Rachel had the ability to make the study of the Bible fascinating and exciting.

Tutor in the Union Christian College (1941-42)

While I was staying in the Bethel Ashram, Thiruvella, I saw an advertisement for the job of a Tutor in the Union Christian College and sent in an application. A Tutor did not teach. He or she was just a hack who supervised the students while they wrote their compositions, and later corrected the mistakes in them. Most students sat and wrote quietly, but there were always a few who liked to draw attention to themselves and, if a Tutor was not

firm, the situation could get out of control. I wonder if colleges still have Tutors and Demonstrators; theirs is a dull and thank less job.

Sixty years ago, when colleges were few and far between, even people with good Honours and Post-Graduate degrees jumped at the chance of getting a job in a College as a Tutor or Demonstrator. The salary was just forty rupees a month, but they could become Lecturers later if a vacancy arose, provided they had a First or Second class. One had to be a trained graduate to get a job in a High School, and anyway someone with an Honours or Post-Graduate degree thought it *infra dig* to teach in a High School. Later on I found teaching at the High School or the lower grades a much more rewarding experience as the classes were smaller and one could have more interaction with the students. The exodus of Indian teachers to African countries and to schools in the Middle East is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The other Tutor in English was P.M. Mathew from Mavelikara who later deservedly got into the Indian Administrative Service, and then the World Bank. He lives in the United States now. Whenever he came on official work to Addis Ababa and later to Geneva, he used to take the trouble to visit us. I had the pleasure of seeing him again a few years ago in Kottayam. It was good to see that Mathew has remained the humble, genuine and warm person he has always been.

It was some time in the nineteen-forties that Alwaye College decided to admit women students. The Women's Hostel was housed in some unpretentious buildings belonging to the Alwaye Settlement. Mr. & Mrs V.M. Ittyerah, the senior wardens, lived in a house close to the hostel. Annie John (Demonstrator in Chemistry) was the Assistant warden, Elizabeth John (Lecturer in Mathematics) and I stayed in the hostel with no duties and responsibilities. Mariam Philip supervised the food arrangements. Matthan Ittyerah (later Director of C.M.C, Vellore) and his sister, Ammu,

were children then. The Ittyerahs, particularly Kochamma, had the rare capacity to make anyone feel at home with them straight away.

One evening a week we used to meet for an hour in their home for reading, discussion and prayer. The friendship that began then lasted till their death, through letters and visits, and today it extends to their children.

Another valued friendship that began at this time was with Thommachen and Samma. A unique contribution of Alwaye was this emphasis on relationships. Though we are now scattered all over the country, and death has claimed some, the warmth persists and extends to the younger generation.

A Year in Andhra Christian College, Guntur (1942-43)

In 1943, when I was a Tutor in English in the Union Christian College, someone brought to my notice an advertisement for the job of a Lecturer in English in the Andhra Christian College, Guntur. I applied, and was called for an interview in the Kodaikanal Railway Station ! I managed to get there and met Dr. Sipes, an affable American, who quickly put me at my ease. After a friendly chat, he offered me the job on a salary of eighty rupees a month, twice the amount I was getting in Alwaye !

I returned to Alwaye, resigned my job and travelled alone to Guntur, changing trains at Madras and at Tenali in Andhra Pradesh. I cannot now remember how I managed to engage a porter and change trains at Tenali, nor how I got to the Stall School in Guntur at dusk, without knowing a word of Telugu! Miss. Accamma Abraham, who is 95 now, and lives in Thiruvella was the Principal of Stall School then, and she made me feel welcome. She was and still is, a good friend, and writes to me regularly. A few days ago I got the news that she has died.

Mr. K.M. Verghese (Kurudamannil) was Professor of Mathematics in A.C. College. On most evenings Accamma Kochamma

and I used to walk over to his home. Mrs Verghese was a fantastic cook, and it did not need much persuasion from her for us to stay on for dinner ! Their sons, Dr.Mathew Verghese in Kottayam, Roy Verghese, an engineer in Madras and Joey in the United States, have all done well in life. Mr. Verghese, a soft-spoken, gentle kind of person, is no more. Annamma lives in Trivandrum and her sister, who lives nearby, is of help to her.

I enjoyed teaching in the Andhra Christian College. The students there seemed to be aware that their parents had sent them to college to work hard to get a degree to qualify them for a job later in life. They sat quietly in class, took down notes, and asked questions to clear their doubts. They did not try to make teaching difficult for inexperienced teachers by the cat-calls and hooting that Malayali students did. I suppose it had a lot to do with the large numbers. A hundred and fifty students in the Intermediate class were just too many, and some students liked to show off by disturbing the class. The Pre-University classes, with just eighty students, must be a relief to those who now teach in Kerala colleges.

It was while I was teaching in Guntur that K.C.J and I decided to get married. When I told Dr. Sipes, the Principal, that I was leaving and why, he wished me good luck, He said that marriages were not always what they were made out to be, and that if ever I needed a job, there would be one for me in A.C.College, Guntur! Before I left, several students invited me to dinner in their homes.

Our wedding on April 29, 1943, was in KCJ's parish church in Puthuvally. In the ensuing days we visited several of his relatives. The women of the house always offered me a change of clothes, and seemed to be surprised that I had brought my own clothes. They could not understand that. It was part of their hospitality to offer a change of clothes to a guest. I am glad that we visited all those simple, affectionate relatives then, for that was the only time we did.

Our years in the Union Christian College (1943-1960)

We went to live in Alwaye in June, 1943. That was fifty-five years ago. Since the house in the campus, meant for us, was only being built, we stayed for a short time in a house that belonged to the Alwaye Settlement.

Like many young women from middle class families, I knew very little about cooking. At that time there was always reliable 'help' in the kitchen and mothers did not think it necessary to inflict domestic chores on their daughters, particularly 'if they went to boarding schools, as we did. So far as they were concerned, they would pick up some knowledge of cooking somewhere along the line as they had done ! Unfortunately I had not done that.

The only house-guest we had at that time was Deacon K. Philipose (later Theophilos Thirumeni) who had come to Alwaye to write an examination. I cannot remember what food I gave him it could not have been anything worth recording. In the nineteen sixties when we lived in Geneva, I used to invite him to a proper dinner whenever he came there for a committee meeting of the World Council of Churches or to pay a visit to one of the East European Churches. Later, whenever he came to Bangalore, he would ask his niece to bring him to visit us. Thirumeni never forgot that he was a human being.

The Union Christian College ('Alwaye College' in common parlance) was, in many ways, a unique institution. The College campus in the nineteen forties and fifties had a simple dignity, informality, caring and warmth that made life there a rewarding experience. The students in the hostel came from more or less similar backgrounds, and they came from all over Travancore. It was a God-fearing community that had its priorities right. The salaries of the teaching staff were low by today's standards. No one owned a car, and when we had to go to Alwaye town, we took a bus, or just walked. The boys walked to St. Mary's School. The girls had a bus to take them to Mahilalayam.

The Assembly Hall then had a thatched roof, but no walls enclosing it. Crows used to 'quack-quack' there sometimes, breaking the monotony of the lecture or the boredom of composition-writing-While the students, enjoyed the disturbance and hissed 'Shoo-Shoo', the teachers found it annoying.

Principal A.M. Varki's Shakespeare classes were so captivating that no student ever cut them. After he left, the Head of the English Department was the erudite Professor Aruvamudham Aiyyangar whose vote of thanks after a meeting often got more applause than the main speech itself ! Mr. T.S. Venketaraman, a gentleman to the core, was an outstanding teacher of Mathematics. His loyalty to the College can be seen from the fact that he named his house in Madras, Always House.

Years later, when I was teaching in Ida Scudder School, Vellore, one of my students came up to me one day and said, 'Ma'am, my mother asked me to tell you that she is the grand daughter of Mr. T.S. Venketaraman, and her mother who is visiting us, would like to see you'. When KCJ and I went to see her that evening, I was amazed at her eagerness to know all about the children of her husband's colleagues in Always, and her sincere happiness on hearing how well all of them were doing. Mr. Anantharaman was devoted to his Chemistry laboratory and spent most of his time there. He came to the staff room occasionally to sign the attendance register. When I was in Poona I was able to visit him.

Mr. D.P. Unni and Mr. Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai were both luminaries in the firmament of Malayalam literature. The outrageous remarks Mr. Krishna Pillai sometimes made used to amuse us. When a student (or was it an 'old' student ?) gave him an invitation card to his wedding, he read it, scowled, and said, 'He is going to do something foolish, but does he have to publicise his folly?' When someone pointed out that if everyone remained a bachelor like him, the world would soon run out of people,

The turn² of round and asked him quite seriously, 'Sir, have you taken a contract to keep the world full?' Who can forget the dignified personality of Mr. C.P. Mathew, who was elected to Parliament in Nehru's time, or Mr. K. Jacob, who kept us in splits with his seemingly inexhaustible stock of hilarious jokes? And just occasionally, the saintly Mr. K.C. Chacko, but for whom there would have been no Alwaye College, came to the staff-room to sign the attendance register.

In those days the Church Missionary Society used to support a British staff member in Alwaye College. Mr. B.G. Crowley worked there for several years. Mr. Beal & Mr. Bell were our contemporaries who served the college briefly. Bishop Stephen Neill, the author of several books, Malcolm Muggeridge, later Editor of PUNCH, Canon Holland, and Rev. Hooper who left the college to help start the Alwaye Settlement, were all once on the staff of the college.

Everyone on the campus, particularly the children, as well as the shop-owners of 'Kunnumpuram' loved Ittyerah sar, with his humility and transparent love of God and man. The College was lucky to have Mr. T.B. Ninan, a confirmed bachelor, as Head of the Physics Department. He spent most of his waking hours there. His brother, T.B. Thomas played basket ball with the students, looking like one of them. He befriended the freshers and made Tagore Hostel 'a home away from home' for them, and this was in addition to being an excellent teacher of Physics. Between four and six in the evening, Mr. C.P. Andrews, the Physical Director, made his presence felt on the campus. He knew the regulars from the shirkers, and none could escape his eagle eye!

Mrs. T.B. Thomas and I had the qualifications to teach in the College, but at that time they had a rule against taking married women on the staff, and we were given jobs only if there were no applications from men with qualifications! I now regard that attitude as male chauvinism! When the University started the Pre University classes, some time in the nineteen-fifties, we taught the first two batches. I have tried to follow, with keen interest,

the careers of the students I have taught, and of the men and women who were my colleagues in Alwaye. It gives me immense pleasure to welcome one or the other of them when they take the trouble to drop in at 249, Indiranagar. I when they visit Bangalore

How well the Alwaye 'kids' have done in life ! Dr. Mathan Ittyerah has just retired as Director of the Christian Medical College, Vellore Mr. K. Jacob's sons, Sam and J. Jacob (Thampan) are good doctors. The latter is the Director of St. Stephen's Hospital, Delhi Susan and Thomas Benjamin are in the Indian Administrative Service and our daughter, Ammu Joseph, is a journalist. Several of them took to teaching- Susan Abraham (Ittyerah) Rebecca Jacob (nee Thomas) Rebecca Kurian (Joseph) Susy Joseph and Molly Eapen Panicker (nee Mathew) are those that come to mind. Dr. Jacob John is a well-known virologist in Vellore, and his brother, Dr. Alexander John, is a cardiac surgeon in Germany. Anna Thomas Betts is on the staff of the Imperial College, London. I'm afraid this is not an exhaustive list, because I'm out of touch.

The Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Union Christian College 1948

In 1948 the Union Christian College Fellowship and its Governing Body decided that the Silver Jubilee of the college should be made use of to raise a fund for the college. But who would volunteer to go around with a begging bowl ? I would hate to be a fund collector, even if I believed in a cause or institution. This is probably because I have found that most people dislike parting with their money.

Mr. P. K. Mathew once took me along when he went to Trichur on a fund-raising trip for Mahilalayam, and swore he would never do that again ! That was because I would keep on whispering to him, 'Let us go, let us go' if I saw the slightest reluctance on the part of the donor -

to part with his money! KCJ, however, seemed to have no problem going a-begging if he believed in a cause. After all, there was nothing in it for him !

One of his early encouraging experiences was from an unexpected quarter- Chelad, a farming area near Kothamangalam. Some of the farmers there were wealthy, but had only primary school education. One such farmer listened attentively to KCJ as he talked about the Alwaye College and what a significant part it could play in the lives of future generations in North Travancore. The old man heard him out, and then told him that he had indeed sent his grand-daughter to Alwaye college to give her the chance that he and his sons had missed out on. He then went into his 'ara' and came out with a thousand rupees. It was a very large amount from an individual fifty years ago, and KCJ was overjoyed. Impressed by their friend's generosity, a few more farmers in that area also pitched in with good amounts, and KCJ returned to Alwaye, pleased with the auspicious beginning of his fund-raising efforts.

When he went to Bombay to collect funds, he stayed with a friend, Mr. Venugopal, a bachelor, a Brahmin, who became a Christian, a high official in the Railways. KCJ seemed to have no problem staying with relatives and friends to avoid running up hotel bills that would otherwise have eaten into the funds collected !

In Bombay he met Dr. John Mathai and Mrs. Mathai. Dr. Mathai was not very encouraging, but Mrs. Mathai was of great help. She gave him a generous personal gift of five thousand rupees, and told him how to go about approaching two Tata Trust committees. One of them gave him twenty-five thousand rupees, saying that if the Mathais had contributed five thousand rupees it had to be a cause worth supporting. In his excitement KCJ sent a telegram to the college to tell them about the large

gift ! Mr. K.C. Chacko and Dr. John Mathai had been friends and class-mates in the Christian College, Madras, and Mr. Mathai had shared Chacko's dream of starting a Christian College, with the support and help of the three main non-Catholic Churches in Travancore. They could not, however, agree on the location of the college. Mr. Mathai felt that it should be in Kottayam, but Mr. Chacko felt that Alwaye, which was a little away from the centre of Church politics, would be a better choice. And on that point, they parted ways, but continued to remain friends.

I think KCJ collected Rs. 48,000 altogether. Fifty years ago that was a very large amount of money. With that money the college completed the Skinner Hostel building by adding a wing, built the present Library building and changed the cocoanut-wood rafters of the Women's Hostel building. I remember going round a Science Exhibition without understanding a thing, and attending the Silver Jubilee Public meeting presided over by Dr. A.J. Boyd of the Madras Christian College.

While KCJ was travelling around for fund collection, I stayed for a year in the Mahilalayam. Reebe, who was in Primary School, attended classes in the neighbourhood school for two days and then stopped. I took her to Thodupuzha and there she stayed with my parents and went to school. Samu, who was just two years old, stayed with me in one of the cottages and was looked after by Thresia, the daughter of Kurien Chettan, the chapel peon in the U.C. College.

I really enjoyed my stay there because I got to know the girls and boys I was teaching. The boys who were in the school then were Thomas Abraham, Asokan, David Mathew, P.K. Mathew's son, and P.C. Thomas, whose father was in the State Transport service.

Davy comes to Bangalore occasionally. He is married to Maimie, the daughter of Mr. M. Thommen and Saramma. A few weeks ago when

Davy and Maimie brought their son and his wife to see me, I felt really old !

Thomas Abraham hardly ever walked, he just ran! Many years ago, when I was standing in the Transport bus-stand in Kottayam Thomas came running upto me. He was a student in the C.M.S. College then. While talking to me he paid me a compliment that I have treasured. 'Baby Kochamma, after you taught me English in the Second Form, nobody else has taught me any more English !' When, years later, I learned that he had become Chairman of FACT I wrote to congratulate him, and he wrote back a very nice letter. A few months ago I happened to pick up from the road a torn piece of paper from the Malayala Manorama. A familiar face looked back at me. It was Thomas Abraham's, and I wondered what he was now upto. As I read the caption, I was shocked and saddened. Thomas had died at the age of 51.

I have not been to Alwaye for many years. It is difficult to think of the college without its hostels, which were what made most parents wish to send their children there. The wardens knew all the students, kept an eye on their academic progress, called Dispensary Mathaichen when they were ill and sent the hostel-boy to buy medicines.

There was roll-call at 7.30 in the evening when the warden, accompanied by the resident junior warden, went to each room to greet the students and to make sure they were there. Most Christian Students accompanied them to the prayer room for the evening service. The singing was nothing to write home about ! If I told KCJ that the singing was particularly bad one evening, he would say that he was sure God was less particular about the standard of singing than I was !

Before the advent of electricity and running water, most students went to the nearby Periyar to bathe. One of the evening chores of the Hostel Boy then was cleaning the kerosene lamps & filling them with kerosene oil. I can still remember the names of

the Hoslel Boys-Chathan in North East Hostel, Kunjan in Holland Hostel, Charan in Tagore Hostel. John in New Hostel and Mohammad in Skinner Hostel. One of their duties was escorting the wardens to the hostel with a lighted lantern for evening roll-call.

Most institutions undergo changes as the years pass. But to people of our generation, it is difficult to imagine the college minus its hostels.

K. C. Chacko of Alwaye

It would not be an exaggeration to say that but for Mr. K.C. Chacko there would not have been a Union Christian College

Mr. Chacko (Kuttichayan' to relatives and close friends) was a younger brother of Mr. K.C. Mammen Mapillai. After taking his Post Graduate degree in Philosophy from the Christian College, Madras, (where his class-mates included Dr. John Mathai and Dr. Radhakrishnan, later President of India) he joined the staff of that college and came to know and admire eminent Scottish Presbyterian Professors like Dr. Skinner, Dr. Miller and Dr. Hogg.

In his late twenties, while he was still in Madras, he developed tuberculosis of the lungs and had to spend several months in the T.B. Sanatorium in Madanapalli. After recovering from that illness, he did not retire and live the life of an invalid. Though he had only half a lung left, he dared to dream of a **Union** Christian College in the running of which the three main non-Catholic Christian denominations would co-operate. He shared his dream with two younger Colleagues in the Christian College, Mr. C.P. Mathew and Mr. V.M. Ittyerah. They talked and prayed together, believing that if their dream was in line with God's will, He would show them the way. And He did.

In 1921 the College began to function in a rented building in Alwaye. Later, the government gave them the old Kutcheri building and the grounds in which it was located. The office rooms, two

or three class rooms, the library and a chapel were in that building in the nineteen-forties.

Mr. Chacko lived in the Resident Warden's quarters of the North-East Hostel (later Chacko Hostel). It consisted of a room and a bath-room and an L-shaped open verandah. He received his visitors, said his prayers, and did all his reading, sitting on that verandah protected from the heat by bamboo curtains that could be rolled up. And his visitors included Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. John Mathai, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, and generations of students who sought his advice and shared their problems with him. He hardly ever gave people advice; he only helped them to find solutions to their problems.

Before retiring from the College, Mr. Chacko (or his brother) had bought a large plot of land near the College campus. It took his persistence and prayers, and the legal acumen of Father T. V. John and a lawyer in Parur to sort out the legal problems involved in its purchase. Once he was convinced that a position he took was right, K C C would move heaven and earth to attain his goal.

K C C's house had one enclosed room, a bathroom and a kitchen. In the remaining part of the house, air circulated freely. During the day, he reclined in an easy chair and at night he slept on a high bed in the same open area. He obeyed doctor's orders strictly and took good care of himself.

Since I had reliable help in the kitchen, I would sometimes go and spend time with him. He would give me passages to read from his theological tomes. Once, while reading from a book by a theologian named Mackintosh, I told him I could not understand a word of what I was reading. His solution to that problem was that I should summarise portions from the book in simple English!

Though he was socially somewhat shy, Mr Chacko found something to say to all his visitors. Whenever my father visited us, he would go and see Mr. Chacko, saying that a visit to him

was more of a spiritual experience than going to the Maramon Convention ! Mr. Chacko would walk in the court-yard with him and ask him what he thought would grow well in that compound. Did he think planting pine-apple was a good idea ? When at last it was decided to plant rubber saplings, Appachen sent two 'experts' from Thodupuzha to do the planting. He himself came to Alwaye, while that work was going on; he considered it a privilege to do that.

Mr. Chacko seldom travelled-unless he was convinced, after much thought and prayer, that his presence would help to solve a problem connected with the Church or the College. In September 1948, serious peace negotiations between the two warring sections of the Church were being held in Trivandrum, and hopes rose high that, at long last, a peace settlement was imminent. Several people, belonging to both parties of the Church, felt that K.C.C's presence would enhance the chances of a peace settlement. KCJ would have liked to accompany him, but in Alwaye College, taking casual leave was just not on.

Mr. Chacko stayed in Palmlands Hotel and I think Bevan (a close relative) and P.J. Mathai, former student and admirer) were on hand to see to his comforts. Tragically the peace talks did not yield the expected results, and Mr. Chacko's body could not take the physical and emotional strain of the travel and the irregular hours of sleep and rest.

And most appropriately, K.C.C's soul flew to its maker as he was chanting the evening canonical prayers. When he would not stop murmuring 'Have mercy on us, O Lord', P.J. Mathai and Bevan realised that something was amiss. Doctors were summoned, and they arrived promptly, but they could only watch as slowly and peacefully, his great soul left his frail body and he breathed his last.

From Trivandrum the body was brought to Thiruvella where one of his brothers lived, and he was buried in the family cemetery

in Thirumoolapuram. A bus-load of us went from Alwaye to Thiruvella for the funeral. Why Thiruvella? I remember asking myself.

Some time later, a burial service was held and a tomb-stone erected in the cemetery of St. Thomas Church near the Alwaye College, where he had worshipped regularly after retirement. It is but appropriate, that though K C C had no children or grandchildren, even fifty years after his death, on September 15th every year, on the anniversary of his death, there is a Retreat in the Fellowship House, the celebration of the Holy Qurbana in St. Thomas Church, and prayers at his grave.

Mr. Chacko never wrote a book, and I have never heard him preach a sermon. I don't believe he was a brilliant teacher, either. But there was an aura of spirituality, goodness and saintliness about him that was almost palpable, which could not but affect the people who had the privilege of meeting him even briefly. Through the corner of my eye, I used to watch the expression on his face when he was totally engrossed in the Holy Qurbana Service in the College chapel on Sunday mornings. I used to feel then that he was, somehow, not there. To this day I can recall that expression, he looked as if he was so very close to God.

The most precious piece of furniture in our house is a small rose-wood table on which we keep our telephone. It was his wedding-gift to us, and it makes me think of him very often.

After KCJ's death, I have sometimes wondered if he, K C C, V.M.I, Thommachen, Avarachen, have met beyond the grave. The good Lord has told us that where He is, there we will be also, and that is, or should be, a wonderful reassurance for us.

Aboona Theophilos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church spoke reasonably good English, and was responsible for relationships with other Orthodox Churches. It must have been on the advice of the late Rev. K.M. Simon, who had worked in Ethiopia, that

Abuna wrote to KCJ in 1959 telling him of the plan of the Ethiopian Church to start a Theological College in Addis Ababa to train priests at the graduate level, and asking him if he would go over to Ethiopia to help them do that. K C J had written back to say he had no intention of leaving his work in India. When Abuna repeated his request in 1960, he thought probably God wanted him to go over and help.

We left for Addis Ababa in the first week of September, 1967. Since there were no direct flights to Addis Ababa, we had to break our journey at Bombay, Aden and Djibuti in French Somaliland. Today there are several direct flights from India to and through Addis Ababa.

ABOUT ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is mentioned twice in the Bible. It is first mentioned in connection with the Queen of Sheba. 'Sheba' was the Biblical name for Southern Arabia, including modern Yemen. It was a wealthy country and the Queen of Sheba had colonised it. In I Kings, chapter 10, we read that when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove him with hard questions. She must have been a remarkable woman to take on Solomon like that! She came with a very great train, with camels that bore spices and very much gold and precious stones.

I have often wondered about the value set on spices in ancient times. Was it pepper, cloves, cinnamon etc? In the days before refrigeration, the spices seem to have acted, not only as flavourings, but also as preservatives, and from ancient times, people have undertaken long, adventurous journeys to get them.

Ethiopians believed that the son the Queen of Sheba gave birth to after returning to her country, was Solomon's, and that Menelik II, their great Emperor, who tried to modernize Ethiopia (1844-1913) by centralising the administration, was a direct descendant of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.

The Second time Ethiopia is mentioned in the Bible is in connection with Philip, the Apostle. One day, on the lonely road from Jerusalem to Gaza, Philip met a eunuch 'of great authority' in the court of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. He had come a long way indeed by chariot to worship in Jerusalem. What a long and arduous journey that must have been ! How half-hearted we often are about getting to Church for Sunday worship despite easy means of transport, comfortable seats and cooling fans !

Urged on by the Holy Spirit, Philip got close to the chariot, and the courteous Ethiopian offered him a ride. Philip found that the Ethiopian was reading from the scriptures without understanding much and he made use of the opportunity to tell him about Jesus. Philip was so convincing that the Ethiopian wished to be baptised immediately. That was done when they came unexpectedly to a stream in that arid region. It was in this way that Christianity came to Ethiopia, an arid, mountainous and inaccessible country, through Philip, a disciple of the Lord Himself.

The modern world became aware of the existence of Ethiopia only when the Fascist troops of Mussolini invaded the country in 1935. In Germany the all-powerful Hitler was busy massacring thousands of Jews in his gas chambers. In the days before the instant means of communication we now have, he could get away with his heinous crimes. After the invasion of Ethiopia by the troops of Mussolini, Haile Selassie escaped to England with his family. To the Ethiopian peasant who toiled on the land to grow the grain 'tef' his family needed to make their 'injera', what happened in the capital was of no consequence.

The Emperor appeared before the League of Nations in Geneva to plead for international help to drive out the Italians. No one paid him any attention; he was an African, after all. The countries of Europe bestirred themselves only when Hitler's troops marched south, right into France, and England had to face air-raids over London night after night.

The years in Ethiopia (1960-1967)

We went to Ethiopia in the first week of September, 1960, nearly forty years ago. The small plane from Cochin to Bombay was so shaky that I felt sick, and a brief halt in Belgaum was a great relief. From Bombay we flew in a larger plane to Aden, at that time a paradise for shopping. The next day we flew to Djibouti in French Somaliland. After a long wait in the airport lounge there, another plane took us to Addis Ababa, flying over an arid, uninhabited area of Ethiopia with few signs of vegetation or human habitation.

When we landed in Addis Ababa air-port I found the place colder than I had expected. A small crowd of relatives, friends and old students of Alwaye College were at the air-port to welcome us. We discovered later that there were many Syrian Christians from Kerala, several of them old students of Alwaye College, teaching in the capital as well as in the outlying provinces.

When the Emperor paid a visit to India in 1960, he had gone to Kerala. A man with a vision for his country and his people, he knew that there was more to life than ploughing, sowing, harvesting and eating, which was all the majority of his countrymen were doing. In Kerala he was greatly impressed by the hordes of children on the roads, walking purposefully to their schools. On his return to his country he made up his mind to start schools all over the country, as he realised that without education there could be no progress. A team from the Ministry of Education was sent to India to recruit teachers. A large number of those who were selected were Christians from Kerala. We found the climate of Addis Ababa cool and pleasant throughout the year, except for a few spells of rain in June-July. At first we stayed in one of the three two-bedroom flats in the Theological College Campus. Bishop Polladian, an Armenian Bishop, and C.I. Thamby from Kerala were our neighbours. As Dean of the Theological College, the Bishop was a misfit, and he seemed to sense that he was a square peg in a round hole. K.C.J. did not mind doing most of the teaching in

the College Section. In the High School Section, most of the teachers were from Kerala. M. I. Kuriakose and K.C. Mathew are now in Kottayam, O.J. Thomas lives in a Retirement Home in Kozhimattom, and Mr. C.I. Thamby, who is married to a relative of mine, lives in Ernakulam. The Bishop's services were terminated at the end of the year and K.C J became the Dean.

It was generally believed that the Emperor was disappointed in his eldest son, the Crown Prince, who lived in almost total anonymity in his own palace. The Emperor's favourite was his daughter, Princess Tenagne work, and he doted on her children, Princess Aida, Princess Ruth, Princess Sophy and Prince Iskander Desta, Commander of the Navy, based in Massawa on the Red Sea. On Friday nights all the members of the Imperial family were expected to dine with the Emperor in the Jubilee Palace. On his way there Prince Iskander would stop by to see us, and invariably, ask me for 'mixture'. I was very, very sad to hear of his death at the hands of the rebels who overthrew the Emperor in 1974, two Years after we had left the country.

His sister, Princess Ruth (who never married) was the Principal of the Empress Menon School, Princess Sophie was the President of the Y.W.C A. and Princess Aida's husband was the Governor of Kassa Province. As people, all of them were charming and gracious. Some years later, I met Princess Aida on the shore of the Lake of Geneva. I went up to her and told her who I was. She said that she had heard of me, and had always wanted to meet me. Graciousness goes with royalty !

Ethiopians have some unusual customs and practices with regard to death and funerals. It was while we were there that the Empress died, and we saw the entire country go into mourning. On the day of the funeral, as the cortege moved slowly along the road towards the Trinity Cathedral, we could see that the procession of mourners consisted of people from the different provin-

ces of the country. Some had inflicted injuries to their faces, and their movement was a sort of rhythmic dance. Dancing comes very naturally to Ethiopians.

When the father of one of my students in Nazareth School died suddenly, some of us went over to her home. Ethiopians do not keep coffins open. A sister of the dead man, who had come from her village, started dancing slowly and rhythmically, making up a song about the virtues of her dead brother. She went on and on and did not stop until her sister-in-law and children had burst into tears. That seemed to be her intention

Addis Ababa is 8000 feet above sea-level and the climate is cool and pleasant throughout the year, except for a few spells of heavy rain in June-July. Indian teachers had good incomes, reliable domestic help, and the spices and groceries they were used to were available in Arab and Greek shops. Fresh vegetables could be bought in the 'markato' the local market. All of us picked up enough Amharic, the local language, to communicate with those who worked for us. Today I cannot speak one word of Amharic !

In December, 1960, three months after our arrival in Addis Ababa, there was a 'coup' (a rebellion) against the Emperor, led by Colonel Mengistu, the chief of his own body-guard. What an irony that was ! The Emperor was visiting countries in Latin America at that time. In the absence of a free press and regular newspapers, which we take for granted, no one had any idea that trouble was brewing. The Emperor certainly would not have (iracy was being) gone to South America if he had the slightest inkling that a conspiracy had hatched in his own back-yard. He returned quickly and was able to get the army to put down the rebellion. The leaders were hanged in public in order to let people know what would happen to those who rebelled against the Emperor.

I was teaching in Nazareth School at that time, and noticed one morning that Ethiopian girls from wealthy, aristocratic families were being taken home, one after the other. One of them

came up to me and said that she would drop me off at home. She gave me no explanation and I did not probe. I took Ammu out of her class, and that caring student took us home. When I told KCJ and other members of the Theological College staff that some trouble seemed to be brewing, they did not take me seriously.

Three hours later, while we were having lunch with the Kuriakoses in their home, all of a sudden we heard the sound of shooting. It was quite scary. A little later, the K U. Thomases, who lived near the palace, arrived, driving along deserted streets, they said. All of us sat in the corridor, saying our prayers. A bullet that came whizzing past, hit the wall just two feet above K.C.J's head as he sat on a chair, not on the floor. It was a narrow escape

Later someone came and told us that a wall of our flat had been hit by stray bullets, and the glass windows had been shattered. We found out later that two suit-cases, which we had not yet unpacked, had been stolen by thieves. They must have been disappointed to find just a couple of black cassocks and three or four sheets in them. We stayed with the Kuriakoses till repairs were carried out in the flat. It was God's mercy that we were not there when it was struck by bullets.

Driving Lessons

K.C.J was an optimist, who believed that everyone could learn to drive a car. When K. U. Thomas gave me my first driving lesson on the deserted old airport runway, it had seemed easy, but it was a different cup of tea altogether on the busy streets of the city ! When KCJ took me out on the streets early in the morning, he could not have known what he was in for ! Every time I put the brake on, the engine stopped ! When a junction loomed ahead, I could not slow down, brake and change gears simultaneously ! Ethiopian drivers of other cars would smile encouragingly and gesture to me to proceed. How could they know I was stuck ? After a while KCJ had to admit that some people just did not have it in them to manoeuvre a car around. But he did not stop giving me driving lessons. I cannot now remember if it was he or I who gave up ! When Reebe came from

India, she took to driving as a duck takes to water. Samu and Ammu are also good drivers.

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Most of us managed to go to the Holy Land from Addis Ababa on pilgrimages organised by Roman Catholic fathers. They worked out inexpensive as we stayed in a hostel for pilgrims run by Roman Catholic priests. It seemed a pity, but unavoidable, I suppose, that all the spots connected with events in the life of Christ are now churches. The rock in the Garden of Gethsamene at the foot of the Mount of Olives is now inside a church. It was there that He prayed that the cup of agony might pass from Him. Pilgrims can still see some gnarled olive trees in the garden outside the church.

I am so glad that we went to the Holy Land with those Roman Catholic Fathers. They said appropriate prayers at each holy spot, and made it a real pilgrimage, not just a sight-seeing trip. After me KCJ, Reebe and Samu took turns to go, but in June, 1967, the Arab-Israeli conflict broke out and so Ammu could not go. Jerusalem is now in the hands of Israel, but they have given a guarantee that there will be free access to their holy places for pilgrims of all faiths.

KCJ and I occasionally got invitations to dinner parties in the palace. The Emperor stood some distance away from his guests whose names were called out as a sort of introduction. We bowed and he acknowledged each of us with a gracious bow of his head. Dr. Sophy Abraham, who had some gorgeous gold-embroidered silk sarees, would come and check the colour of my blouses and bring me one of her sarees to wear at the party in the palace! That was the sort of relationships we had in Addis Ababa.

To Ethiopians raw beef is a delicacy. At dinner-parties bearers would bring it to the various tables with a sharp knife and Ethiopian guests sitting at our table would slice a piece and put it in their plates !

Group Captain Cheshire, who piloted the plane that dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, to end the Second World War, lived to regret his action. When he came to Addis Ababa, Prince Alexander invited him and us, to have dinner in Ghion Hotel. The prince was a young man without a trace of snobbery in him. To express his deep regret, Group Captain Cheshire later started 'Cheshire Homes' for the physically handicapped in several countries. There is one in Bangalore, and I know people who go and help out there as volunteers.

On Sunday mornings, after the long Ethiopian Church service was over, the Indian Orthodox Community had a Holy Qurbana service in the Trinity Cathedral. There was a social aspect also to this service. After the service, people stood around and talked, exchanging news, while the children played 'hide and seek' or 'catch me if you can'.

Abraham Verghese (Sajan), the author of the best-seller, 'My Own Country', a book about his experiences with Aids patients in Pennsylvania, was one of them. After reading the book, I wrote to him expressing my delight and appreciation, and he immediately wrote back a very nice, warm letter. I am told that a film based on the book is being made. Good for you, Sajan. We are all basking in reflected glory !

Once a year, on the Saturday before Easter, the members of the Orthodox congregation used to attend a one-day retreat in the chapel of the estate of a ras, a noble-man, at the top of a hill. Ethiopia was a feudal country then with the Emperor at the top, and rich noble-men who owned vast areas of land next. Then came the numerous poor tenants who toiled on the land that they did not own.

However, hardly anyone starved. Servants of wealthy people had orders to cook plenty of food and never to turn away anyone who came asking for food. But some years after we left Ethiopia, we saw on T.V. tragic pictures of starvation in the country. There was

no strong, educated middle-class there, as we have in most parts of India now. But in the outbacks of Bihar, U.P., Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, we still do hear of the cruel and heartless ways in which rich landlords exploit and occasionally massacre their poor, landless, low-caste tenants. Most of us tend to compare other people's worst with our best. What can be more cruel than 'sati' the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands in remote areas in Rajasthan, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh etc till recently? Even a few months ago we heard about nuns being murdered in North India.

When we were in Asmara, Eritrea, a wealthy raas and his wife, parents of two of my students in Empress Menen School, invited us to lunch in their palatial home. They were wealthy aristocrats, but how gracious they were! I knew that one of the two girls was his daughter by a woman on his domestic staff. They were both accepted as his daughters and everyone seemed to live amicably! When we took leave the raas gave me a gold medallion as a present. I could not help marvelling at the graciousness of that truly aristocratic family.

In my second year in Empress Menen School, two Senior British teachers of English, first Mrs. Hudson, and then Mrs. Relton left for greener pastures. The former went to Nigeria with her husband, and the latter got a job in the University of Addis Ababa. When the Ministry of Education started its frantic search for an English woman to be the Senior Teacher of English in that prestigious school, Mrs. Relton assured them that the search was unnecessary as Mrs. Joseph was as good as any British teacher! They gave up their search then, and I became the first non-English Senior Teacher of English and Head of the English Department in the Empress Menen School, and was paid a man's salary, which was double that of a woman! Ethiopians had a nationality and a sex bias and a weakness for white skin. Later I found that even American Peace Corps volunteers used to look slightly surprised when a woman in a sari was introduced to them as the Senior Teacher of English with whom, they would be working!

The Secretary in charge of Orthodox Churches on the staff of the World Council Churches, Geneva, used to visit Addis Ababa once a year. In 1967, he asked KCJ if he would consider joining the staff of the WCC as Secretary for Scholarships, given mainly to students of Theology. KCJ knew that he was not leaving the Theological College in the Church as Dr. V.C. Samuel and Father A.T. Gabriel were already on the staff and would carry on. He decided to leave Ethiopia and join the staff of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, in September, 1967.

It must have been because of a suggestion from Abuna Theophilos that before we left for Geneva, KCJ got a call from the palace for an audience with the Emperor. Through an interpreter the Emperor graciously told him that he was aware of what he had done for the Ethiopian Church through his work in the Theological College. As a token of his appreciation he gave him a gold medallion. Years later, by a strange coincidence, a relative of mine was asked by the air-hostess of an Ethiopian Airlines flight if, by any chance, he knew a Mrs. Joseph who was her teacher of English in Addis Ababa. When he told her he was related to me, she wrote her name on a piece of paper, told him to give it to me and sent me her love. Such are the rewards that a teacher gets!

ABOUT SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is a small, mountainous country of about six or seven million people (about the population of Bangalore), and an area of 16,000 square miles. Till the nineteenth century, it was regarded as one of the poorer countries of Europe! A mountainous country, it has no extensive farms like those in the United States, Canada and Australia, nor a wealthy farming community. The Rhine and the Rhone rivers have their sources in Switzerland. There is a relatively small agricultural plateau drained by lakes. Numerous passes and tunnels assure access to other countries by rail and road.

But in spite of the paucity of natural resources and a largely barren soil, Switzerland has achieved a high degree of prosperity

through technological skill, and a reputation for integrity and reliability, which keeps their bank coffers full. The Swiss export machinery, textiles, chemicals, watches, cheese and chocolates. The natural beauty of the country attracts large numbers of tourists and the tourist-trade is one major source of income.

South American dictators like Peron, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the enormously wealthy German Jews, who perished in the haulocast, and the rich and the famous of our own country, kept their money in Swiss banks. Unless criminality is established, (not suspected) Swiss banks will not reveal the names of depositors. No wonder we do not yet know what happened to the money illegally paid as commission for the armaments deal between India and Bofors of Sweden. It is in the interest of the Swiss not to tell us. There must be some red faces in Swiss banking circles because of questions raised recently by the relatives of the wealthy Jewish depositors who perished in Hitler's gas chambers.

Zurich, Berne (the capital), Basle and Geneva are the main cities of Switzerland. Politically the country is divided into twenty-three cantons, each with a high degree of independence. About 72% of the population speak Swiss-German, and the rest speak French, and Italian.

Swiss mercenary soldiers used to serve in the armies of various European countries. Swiss guards have been in the Pope's body-guard since 1505. Switzerland has joined the League of Nations. In 1963 it became a member of the Council of Europe.

The Swiss do need foreign workers for their factories, So they issue residence permits to workers from Spain, Portugal and Italy for ten months at a time. In mid-winter, when work in the factories comes to a halt, they have to go back to their own countries. When they return, they get a permit for another ten months. The Swiss are very shrewd; they do not want a 'foreign workers' problem'.

The Swiss have a Federal Council chosen by the Federal Assembly. Its seven members rotate as Presidents. The average

foreigner living in Switzerland may not know who the President is and when his car passes along the roads, traffic does not come to a halt. The wife of the President does her own shopping in the supermarket in the neighbourhood. She drives her own car, parks it in the parking-lot, makes her purchases, carries her bags to the car and drives home, just like other house-wives. No chauffeur, no security guards ! I bet she does her own cooking too, though, like many other house-wives, she may have a maid for a few hours to help her.

Every adult male in Switzerland, whatever his job, has to go for forty days of military training every year, and they are allowed to keep their arms in their cellars. The Swiss government trusts its citizens! I used to think of Switzerland as a place where nothing ever went wrong! Electricity was not erratic, bulbs never fused, buses and trains were punctual to the minute, and there were supermarkets within walking distance, where you could buy anything from rice and atta, meat and fish, to cheese and chocolates.

A Swiss lady, who used to come to me to practise her spoken English told me that her widowed mother lived with her, but her brother paid her a certain amount of money every month for her maintenance. If he did not, and the mother complained, the government would take a certain amount from his salary and pay it to her ! But if the government was convinced that, with a growing family and increasing expenses, he just could not afford to support her, then the government itself would grant her a pension. Very fair, very Swiss !

It is said that to the Swiss, their home is their castle. Nobody rings their door-bell and strolls in for a chat, as we sometimes do here. I'll relate an interaction I once had with a Swiss woman who lived on the fourth floor in 19, Palettes, our entrance. She and her husband kept very much to themselves and no neighbours had as much as stepped into their flat. One day, to my great surprise, a lady rang my door-bell and introduced herself as the person

who lived on the fourth floor. She said that she and her husband were going to Italy for a holiday. Would I water their potted plants while they were away? I said that was no problem and she gave me a key to their flat. Two weeks later, she came to my door again, this time with a pot of African violets, and said, 'Thank you very much, Madam Joseph. Please come and have a cup of coffee with me at ten o'clock tomorrow morning'. That was it; the debt had been repaid! My German, Italian, and English friends teased me and wanted to know what exactly I had seen in the mystery flat!

We lived close to an elementary school and every morning I used to see boys and girls walking to school. They walked past rose shrubs full of lovely red roses and apple trees loaded with apples. If a child stretched out its hand to pick a rose or an apple, the mother just said, 'No no,'

MEMORIES OF GENEVA (1967-1972)

I flew to Geneva from London and landed there on a chilly day. I was met at the airport by a young Secretary from the World Council of Churches and taken to a hotel near the Geneva railway station to await the arrival of Ammu and KCJ from Addis Ababa. The only language spoken by people around me was French. Now, I had had French in college and could read and understand the language but the French spoken fast by native speakers of the language was another cup of tea altogether!

It was a bed-and-breakfast hotel where you could eat any number of rolls and any amount of butter at breakfast time, but you had to fend for yourself for the rest of the day. There was a very friendly American woman, with two young sons, in the next room and we would go out together for lunch and dinner. It was her first trip abroad and she was on her way to Ceylon to join her doctor husband. We had fun trying to figure out what the menu card in French had to offer us. When I told her there would be many more surprises awaiting her in Ceylon, she said that at least they spoke English there!

When KCJ and Ammu arrived two days later, we moved to a three-bedroom flat in Palettes in Grand Lancy, a suburb of Geneva. Father Paul Verghese (the late Bishop Gregorios), had just left and we had bought all his furniture without seeing it. I was slightly taken aback by the colour of the sofa-set, purple ! Was it his favourite colour or was it in anticipation of the bishopric awaiting him ? I still use his saucepans for cooking. He died in New Delhi in December 1996 and his body was brought to Cochin in an IAF plane for burial in the Old Seminary in Kottayam.

As memory takes me back over the years gone by, I feel that some of the happiest years in my life were those I spent in Geneva. I was just a house-wife. If I had been younger, with responsibility for small children, life may not have been so care-free and pleasant.

In the mornings, after the husbands had left for work (by 8 O' clock, winter and summer) and the school-going children had been sent to school, women did their shopping for the day, usually at the Migros, a supermarket chain found all over Switzerland. Those who had babies brought them along in baby carriages.

The Migros supermarket chain was founded by an enterprising house-wife who wanted to apply her Christian principles to trade and commerce. Vegetables and fruits were bought cheap in North African countries, Spain and Southern Italy, where the climate was just right for them. Farmers there were paid fair prices and did not have to worry about sales. They were then sold in Migros stores all over Switzerland. Suddenly prices plummeted and reached a reasonable level all over the country. Chicken came from Denmark and sausages from Germany. You could buy a whole frozen chicken or smaller portions. There was a section for yogurt (our curds) with different flavours in containers of about a cup. If we wanted it plain, (as we do) it was there. If you wanted it for dessert, flavoured with fruit, coffee, or chocolate, you could pick up that too. One container was just right for one person.

On my first shopping expedition, I was standing near the cheese section, marvelling at the variety available, when a young woman came up and introduced herself as Elizabeth Hofelich, who was going to be my neighbour. She told me that if what I wanted was cheese powder, that packet would be a good choice. She added that she lived on the second floor of 19, Palettes, where we lived on the fourth floor, and I could ring her door-bell any time without worrying about inconveniencing her. We remained friends throughout our stay in Geneva. She was a warm, out-going, thirty-six-year-old Italian, a Chemistry graduate. Her husband was a reserved, taciturn German scientist, very different, from her. They had met at their place of work and were happily married, though poles apart in many ways. He was not interested in religion. She was a pillar of the local Catholic church and taught a Sunday School class for teen-agers in the parish hall. Ammu used to be baby-sitter for her little son if, once in a while, she had to go out with her husband.

Whenever Elizabeth took the car to do her 'big' shopping, she would take me also. For three days before we left Geneva, while the packers were in our flat, we had all our meals with Elizabeth, our wonderful Italian friend. They were planning to move to Germany. I wish I had kept in touch. Samu, who is now in Germany, could have contacted her.

We were lucky to have Mr & Mrs C.I. Itty as our neighbours in Palettes. Bella was a very efficient person. Two days after our arrival there, Ammu had to get to the International School which was a long way from Palettes. Bella said that she had heard that in an emergency we could call Telephone no : 111 for help. Ammu dialled 111 and the man who answered was very civil. He asked her if she could take bus no : 4 from Palettes and get to Bel Air. She said she could. 'Well, take that bus, get down at Bel Air and

wait for bus no: 11. Just tell the driver when you get in. International School. He will drop you there.'

Two days after we moved to Palettes, KCJ had a head-ache that would not respond to the medicines he had with him. Again Bella suggested that we call 111. We were given the name of a doctor and he arrived within a very short time. He was courteous and pleasant and wrote out a prescription. He did not take payment, as that would be taken care of by KCJ's medical insurance. Later I learned that a small amount was taken from the salary every month for medical insurance. Mr. Mathew (from Ranni) was working for the ILO. As a young man, he had answered an advertisement, gone to Yugoslavia and taken a University degree. From there he went to Geneva and got a job with the ILO, all on his own initiative. Since they lived close to the International School, Ammu used to take her lunch and have it in their house. After a week, Valsa told her not to bring her lunch; she could have a hot lunch with her. I was god-mother to Priya, their daughter. Valsa died a few years ago. Mr. Mathew, who lives in Geneva even now, did not forget to send me an invitation to Priya's wedding in the United States some years ago.

Once a month KCJ used to celebrate Qurbana in the chapel of the Y.M.C.A. for the families of Itty, Mathew, and Pappan. On other Sundays we went to the Anglican Church near the Lake of Geneva.

Travelling by the city bus in Geneva was not an unpleasant experience. Buses ran on electricity. There were no conductors. The driver issued the tickets as you got in; you said 'thank you' for the ticket and he said 'thank you' for the money! If a woman with a child in a pram or a disabled man with crutches, wanted to board a bus, the driver would look into the mirror and wait patiently till he took his seat. I have seen drivers leave their seats and go to the assistance of young mothers with babies in prams. Men, as well as youngsters, automatically gave up their seats for elderly passengers.

When we were there there was a change in the way tickets were bought. At your bus-stop you dropped a 50-cent coin into a machine and a ticket popped out. With it you could travel for an hour even in two or three buses. Once in a while an Inspector got in for checking. All the time I was there I never saw anyone travelling without a ticket, not even teenagers, just for the heck of it ! People over sixty could travel for half the fare in trains and buses, and for the blind and the physically handicapped, travel was free.

At each bus-stop there was a time-table for the buses, which was strictly adhered to. If a bus was scheduled to leave at 9.46, the driver would not wait for someone running to catch it. I was once very angry with a driver who would not wait for me. The driver of the next bus had seen what had happened and knew I was angry. Since he had come three minutes early and we were alone, we began to chat. I said that the driver was a racist ! He suggested that he must have been in a bad mood, having left home without breakfast after a quarrel with his wife ! He succeeded in making me laugh.

My American neighbour, Ginny Corzine, and I joined several conversation groups to improve our capacity to understand and speak French. I had an advantage over her as I had had two years of French in college. I think Americans are slow at picking up new languages because normally they grow up hearing only English. In school their second language was Spanish. Indians quickly pick up new languages, perhaps because our ears are attuned to several languages.

Two years ago I got in touch with Ginny in the U.S.A. She sent me snapshots of her four boys, now grown-up men. One of them has married a North Indian girl. When her sister-in-law once visited her in Geneva, she told me she had seen women in saris on American streets but had no idea any of them could speak English !

Margaret Murray, whose husband, Geoffrey, was on the staff of the WCC, came to our door not long after we moved into our flat in 19, Palettes. She introduced herself, said she lived on the fourth floor and I could ring her door-bell any time I had a problem or just wanted to chat. When they decided to move to another area of Geneva, she asked me to take over the English conversation group she had, consisting of Germans, French and Italians. I protested that my accent was Indian ! 'She said that my accent was fine, and having been a teacher, I would be able to draw them out and get them all to talk. A year later Geoffrey died of a heart attack during a meeting, and Margaret returned to England, where she married again and lived with her husband in the Isle of Man. When KCJ died, I wrote to let her know, but Roger, her adopted son, wrote back to say she had died, and her death was followed by that of her husband a week later. He himself was engaged to an Australian girl and was emigrating to Australia.

It was through Ammu's baby-sitting that Helen Nolan and I became friends, a friendship that lasted till her death in Dublin a few years ago. Her husband, Brian Nolan, was the Irish Ambassador to the United Nations and they had to go to late-night parties occasionally. Their children were 12 and 10 and they did not like to leave them alone in the flat at night. Someone had told them that Ammu was a reliable baby-sitter, so they called her up whenever they had to go to a party.

One night they returned from a late-night party to find Ammu fast asleep on the sofa ! They talked aloud to each other till she woke up, feeling quite embarrassed. Helen didn't tell me; Ammu did. Brian always escorted Ammu home late at night. After we left Geneva and they returned to Dublin, Helen and I kept in touch through letters. They returned to Berne, the capital, when Brian became Ireland's Ambassador to Switzerland. While they were in Berne, Brian fell ill and the doctors told them he had cancer. He went through a period of great pain, and died in Berne, conscious till the end. Just before he breathed his last, the expression on his face changed and he told Helen, 'Everything is beautiful, just beautiful' What did he see ? I wonder.

Some years later, when Ammu was in Cambridge for a course she went to Dublin and spent a couple of days with Helen. The daughter, Niamh, is a doctor in Dublin and the son has emigrated to South Africa. When KCJ died, I wrote to Helen but Niamh wrote back saying she was planning to inform me that Helen had died after a brief illness. Helen was a fantastic cook and always insisted on our having Christmas lunch with her family.

It was by sheer accident that we met the Magnins, a Swiss couple who had lived in Kerala for two years, and loved every minute of their stay there. The Swiss engineering company he worked for had sent him to India to instal their machinery in the Peringalkuthu dam site. Once at an Indian fete, they came up to me and asked me if I was from Kerala. When I said I was, they said they had very happy memories of their stay in Chalakudi and would very much like to get to know our family. I invited them to a meal and Mrs. Magnin showed me her bangles bought from Swami and Company in Alwaye. That sounded familiar! Later they took us to spend a day in their chalet (pronounced 'shaley') and to see a friend's farm nearby. The owner of the farm had three grown-up sons, all of whom had regular jobs. One was an engineer, another a doctor and the third was in the police force. All of them came to work and help him out on Sundays and he paid them regular wages! Very business-like, very Swiss! Each Swiss cow had a cow-bell by the sound of which the owner could identify the ones that strayed. All drivers of cars stopped to let a herd of cows cross the road at their own leisurely pace.

Edith Hagemann was a German whose husband worked for the multinational firm, Dupont, and he did a lot of travelling. He told me once that he was surprised that in the streets of New Delhi he did not see young men and women walking around in pairs. He wanted to know why! That was, of course, in the nineteen-sixties.

Edith told me that inspectors from the 'Regie', the organisation that owned our flats, would come to inspect our flats before we left it, and they would impose a fine if they were not satisfied with the condition in which we had left it. She said that she would come and do the cleaning to meet their standards. After the packers had left and our luggage dispatched to India, Edith came with brushes and dusters and did the cleaning-up, as only German house-wives can

A few years ago Edith's son and his girl- friend rang our door bell at 249 one evening and asked if they could spend the night here. I told them they were welcome. While they were having their baths, I quickly boiled some potatoes and beans and served that with omelettes. They slept on the carpet in the sitting room and saved some money!

I remember asking Edith once whether people like her parents had been aware of Hitler's concentration camps for the Jews and the atrocities against them. She said that she was in school then and one by one, the Jewish girls had been called out from their class-rooms, and they never came back. Nobody in school talked about them any more as their parents had told them not to utter a word about the girls who had disappeared. Mrs. Moronaga, my Japanese friend, told me that she and her friends in school worked more in the rice fields than in the class-rooms during the war. They worked with great enthusiasm and vigour as they were told by their teachers that they were working for their country as the men had gone to flight against its enemies.

Barbara Fischer, wife of Lucas Fischer on the W.C.C staff, was Swiss. She took me once to see a Swiss mansion, the grounds of which sloped down to the lake of Geneva. A part of that huge old mansion was large enough to house the owner and his family. The lady of the house opened a cupboard in the wall and took out some old family crockery to show me. I told her that I was no expert but we served food to our servants in such old dishes, and we ourselves now used stainless steel or plastic dishes! She said that if I brought such old crockery to Geneva I might be able to make a fortune!

Barbara had 'au pair' girls from Denmark, usually the daughters of clergy-men, who came to Geneva to learn French. In the morning they helped her with household chores and in the afternoon they went

to French classes. They were treated like members of the family. I thought of those 'au pair' girls when I read about the English 'au pair' girl who went to look after Sunil Eapen's baby. I feel there was an element of racism in that incident. You can sense racist attitudes in most countries in the West. Sonia Gandhi was just an 'au pair' girl in England when Rajiv happened to meet her & marry her. Today our politicians just stop short of prostrating themselves before her!

The Moronagas, as the name suggests were a Japanese couple, with two small boys. They lived on the 6th floor in 19, Palettes. He was the manager of the local office of Japan Airlines. A Swiss friend, Margaret Muller, who had lived in Japan for a few years, introduced her to me and asked me to teach her 'a little English'. What started as a teacher-student relationship developed into a close friendship that has survived the passing of the years. When Hiro, their older son, was a baby, Ammu was their baby-sitter. A few years ago Hiro came to Bangalore and stayed with her for a couple of days. Yuji, the second son, spent a year in Zimbabwe as a volunteer teacher. The Japanese do not like the idea of being indebted to anyone. I have with me several tokens of their affection for us. Just before they left Geneva, Mr. Moronaga took us out to dinner at a very expensive hotel!

Paulo Freiri from Brazil, the renowned expert on adult literacy, was our neighbour in 19, Palettes. Just a thin wall separated our bedroom from his wife's. One day Paulo rang our door-bell and came in, looking slightly embarrassed. He had come to tell KCJ that his early morning canonical prayers said aloud, were disturbing his wife's sleep, and that she was a bit of an insomniac. KCJ apologised and changed the venue of his early morning prayers to the dining room!

Some years later, when we were in Melbourne, on hearing that Paulo was going to address a meeting, we went to hear him speak. Seeing a woman in a sari in the audience, he had a second look, came charging towards me and gave me a warm hug, to the surprise of the people in the audience.

The Swiss take pride in their honesty and efficiency. I went to the local post office once and told the girl at the desk that I wished to send a registered parcel to a friend in Ireland. She wanted to know why I wanted to register the parcel. I replied that it was to make sure she

got it . She said to me, ' Madam, when you send a parcel from Switzerland you can be sure it will reach the person at the other end'. The parcel went unregistered, and reached my friend!

Two weeks before we left Switzerland, I went to the local bank and told the woman at the counter that I wanted to withdraw the money I had there. When she asked me why I wanted to withdraw the whole amount, I said it was because we were leaving the country. She excused herself, picked up the telephone, made a call, and then gave me the forms to fill. I wanted to know what that was all about. She said that it was to make sure I didn't owe any money to people or shops! I suppose the Swiss government keeps a record of people who try to leave the country without paying their bills! As in the post office, there was just one person managing that branch of the bank. The Swiss do not waste their time and energy lingering, laughing, chatting and walking around in the office. They are paid to work and they work. I remember that when I ⁹⁰went to my neighbourhood bank! When they get one month's leave every year, they go to the snow-covered slopes of the Alps for skiing for a fortnight in winter. In summer they take the car and drive to Italy, Austria or Yugoslavia for two weeks to enjoy a holiday with their families. When they are at work, they work; when they are on holiday, they relax.

It was while we were in Geneva that we watched Neil Armstrong land on the moon.

TEN DAYS IN ITALY

Ammu and I went from Geneva to Rome on a relatively cheap railway ticket with which we could travel anywhere in Italy for twelve days. We started from Geneva in the evening and reached Rome by nine the next morning. Trains in Europe have only first and second class carriages. Even the second class carriages there were better, though more expensive than the first class carriages in Indian trains! If you wanted to lie down and sleep, that cost you extra money.

At 9 p.m. an attendant brought us mattresses, blankets, fresh sheets and pillows. He was a college student, who worked at night and attended classes during the day. I can still recall how pleasant and

solicitous he was. The Indian attitude to work and workers seems to be quite wrong. I suppose that attitude has something to do with the caste system

A few minutes before the train left Geneva an elderly woman got into our compartment. Within five minutes she had told us that she was seventy years old, and that she was going to Malta! She looked me up and down for a minute and said she was glad I was not an Arab! She had once travelled with an Arab family and that was an experience she did not want to go through again! Suddenly she stopped the one-sided conversation to ask me if I was on the Arab or Israel side! In the next hour she told us her entire life-history. She was a Russian, English mother and Russian father. At 18, her parents got her married to the son of a wealthy man in Leningrad. Her parents were killed in the Revolution and her 54-year-old son also had died recently. It was most interesting to listen to her; so what if it was a one-sided conversation?

In Rome we stayed in a Spanish convent with bed-and-breakfast arrangement for tourists. There we were joined by Gladys Lawther, a good American friend, who had been the Secretary of the Y.W.C.A in Addis Ababa. We kept in touch till her death a couple of years ago. Though she had lost her eyesight she wrote regularly with help from a kind nephew. When she died, her sister wrote to me saying she knew how fond she was of us, and thought we would want to know that she had died.

Many convents in Rome make money letting out rooms relatively cheap to middle class tourists(women). The rooms were meticulously clean, the sheets were fresh, and the food was good, but the gates were closed at 11 p.m. and you had to be back before that.

Most visitors to Rome begin their sight-seeing with a visit to St. Peter's Cathedral and the Vatican, the residence of the Pope. The Pope is the ruler of this 108-acre state. It is the centre and heart of the Roman Catholic Church and for a Roman Catholic, a visit to the Vatican and St. Peter's Cathedral is the fulfilment of a dream. The Papal court guarded by Swiss guards, and administered by Cardinals, has a certain austere splendour. We went through several museums, and in the 'magazine section' of one of them, I was thrilled to see something written in

Malayalam on a very old palm leaf. The Vatican library is, perhaps, the oldest library in the world.

The Sistine Chapel, built in 1483 for Pope Sixtus IV, is the private chapel of the Popes, one of the glories of the Vatican. It is famous for its decorations, notably Michelangelo's frescoes, of Old Testament scenes on the vaulted ceiling and his 'Last Judgement' on the end wall. On the side walls are frescoes by other Italian artists like Perugino and Botticelli. It is possible to go on gazing at all this in awe and wonderment for a long, long time.

As I stood in the huge courtyard in front of St. Peter's Cathedral, believed to have been the site of Nero's circus where he threw Christians to lions, I had the sense of the fulfilment of a dream.

The work on St. Peter's started in 1507 under Pope Julius II and the Cathedral was ready for public worship in 1582. It took the genius of many eminent artists like Raphael, Michael Angelo, Giocondo and Bernini to complete this fantastic dream of a cathedral. Outside I saw an obelisk (a tall pillar) from Egypt, two enormous fountains, and the statues of a hundred and forty saints. The enormous doors of the cathedral have been guarded by Swiss guards since 1505. I also saw the balcony on which the Pope stands on special occasions to bless pilgrims to Rome. In spite of the huge crowds milling around, there was absolute silence.

We climbed an enormous number of steps to get to the portico from which there are five doors of entry in to the cathedral. One of them, the Holy Door, is opened only in special Jubilee years. The guide showed us a huge bronze door designed by a communist artist in memory of Pope John XXIII.

St. Peter's Cathedral is a veritable museum. Many famous painters and sculptors of Italy have contributed products of their talents to add to the beauty and artistic splendour of this edifice. Tears pricked my eyes as I stood reverently before Michael Angelo's Pieta, his representation of the Virgin Mother, mourning over the dead body of her son, Jesus. Some years later, when I heard that the statue had been vandalised by a crazy man, I could not help wondering what sort of man would be so perversely crazy as to want to destroy that beautiful

work of art. When someone told Michael Angelo that his Virgin looked too young to be the mother of a 31- year- old man, he replied that his image of the Virgin Mother was that she was ageless, unchanging, eternal.

Inside the Cathedral, the main altar and the chair of St. Peter are the works of Bernini, an Italian sculptor and architect. In front of a bronze statue of St. Peter, there was a long queue of people waiting to kiss his toe, which looked a little worn from the tearful kisses of thousands of pilgrims over the years. In the early centuries after the death of Christ, Christians lived in fear of persecution. They knew that if they were caught worshipping, they would be thrown to the lions by Emperor Nero who was Roman Emperor from A.D. 54 to 68. His name is a by-word for cruelty. Rumour blamed him for the great fire of Rome (A. D. 64) but he accused the Christians of starting it and began the first spell of persecution. The arena in which the Roman crowds could watch men fighting against men, and Christians fighting against lions, can still be seen.

The catacombs, used by early Christians as burial places and for worshipping in secret, are several miles from Rome. On the way there is a small church at the spot where Jesus appeared to Peter who was running away from his persecutors. When Jesus asked him why he was running away, Peter was so ashamed of his cowardice that he returned to Rome forthwith and was caught by the persecutors. When he was condemned, he wished to be crucified with his head down, as he was not worthy to be crucified as the Lord was.

The catacombs are twenty- two to sixty- five feet below the ground and cover an area of more than five hundred acres. I was not aware that they were so extensive. They were built over the first five centuries A. D. Tombs were cut into the thick walls of narrow plastered passages. The walls were covered with frescoes, which are pictures painted on plaster before it is dry. By the 8th century A. D. most bodies were removed to churches.

It was with a tourist group with a guide that Ammu and I went to the catacombs. We were counted as we entered and strictly warned not to lose sight of the guide as, within minutes one could get completely lost. After Gladys Lawther, an American friend, joined us in

Rome, we went on an unforgettable sight-seeing trip to Southern Italy, to Naples and to Sorrento. The bus took us along the coastal road skirting the Bay of Naples, through some of the most gorgeously beautiful scenery I have ever seen anywhere. The hill slopes to the left were covered with apple orchards.

In the distance we could see smoke rising from the Vesuvius, a volcanic mountain that is still active. We took a tourist trip to Pompeii, a ruined Roman city in southern Italy at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius near Naples. It was a flourishing port and wealthy resort before it was totally destroyed by an eruption of the violent Vesuvius. Volcanic ash and cinders preserved the ruins which were rediscovered in 1748 and have since been much excavated.

Naples in Southern Italy is Italy's second largest seaport. It is located at the base of the slopes of hills rising from the Bay of Naples and occupies one of the most beautiful sites of Europe. We visited the famous museums of the city with their invaluable collections of priceless paintings and the famous statue, David, by Michael Angelo. We spent a lot of time in these museums and I bought two or three prints of famous paintings. Now I wish I had bought more!

From Florence we went to Venice by train. Samu, who had to stay on in Ethiopia to complete her degree course, joined us here. The city of Venice is built on 118 islets linked to each other by bridges. Venice is linked to the mainland by rail and highway bridges. Murano on a nearby island is famous for glass manufacturing. Venice is famous for its splendid palaces and churches, its hundreds of canals and bridges. It has a unique wealth of art treasures and is full of tourists in summer. The traffic is on foot or by boat. At the city's centre are St. Mark's Square and St. Mark's Church. The large, open area in front of the Church was full of tourists feeding pigeons. The churches in Venice contain treasures of Venetian painting which reached its zenith with Titian and Tintoretto. Venetian crystal is famous.

FOUR DAYS IN MOSCOW (1970)

To our great good fortune, we were able to spend four days in Moscow as the guests of the Russian Orthodox Church in the summer of 1970. At that time it was not easy for ordinary tourists to visit Russia. We managed to go as guests of the Russian Orthodox Church, and that became possible because KCJ was an ordained Orthodox priest on the staff of the World Council of Churches!

To get a visa one had to go through a travel agency that did business with Intourist, the government travel agency of Russia. In most airports in Europe, they are in a hurry to get you past the customs and emigration counters. In Moscow we had to answer several questions! Who has invited you to visit Russia? Who will pay for your stay here? How long are you going to stay?

When we had answered their questions to their satisfaction, we were allowed to go out and contact Nina Bovorova, whom the Church had delegated to look after us while we were in Moscow. She seemed to be in her late thirties and spoke very good English. Born in Japan and educated there, she also got married to a Russian when she lived there. They came to Moscow when she was twenty-five, and there she had two children. Her husband worked in the Broadcasting department and Nina in the Church office. Nina was a believer; he was not. Nina wanted to bring her children up as believers; he had no objection to that, but he wanted them to decide for themselves when they were grown up.

He had a salary of 300 roubles, and she, 200. Since his mother stayed with them, they did not have to worry about the children. She had a pension, too. Since all buildings belonged to the government, 10 roubles was all they had to pay as rent. Basic items and electricity were very cheap. I got the impression that while luxury articles were expensive, essential things were relatively cheaper than in non-communist countries.

In the hotel where we stayed, I noticed that a woman sat at a strategic point on each floor, from where she could have an eye on everyone who came to and left the rooms on that floor. A Russian woman, a stranger to us, knocked at our door and came in to talk to

us. She brought me two ball-point pens because she thought that we did not have them in India! She asked me so many questions about life in India that I thought that the average educated Indian knew more about Russia than the average Russian knew about India! Everyone in communist Russia seemed to have a job and an income. Most of those who operated lifts were house-wives, who were given convenient hours.

We were received by the Patriarch, a very dignified person, but it was just a gesture, an honour to us as KCJ was with the World Council of Churches, and he was a priest of the Orthodox Church in India.

In the Red Square there were two tourist attractions - St. Basil's Church and the tomb of Lenin. The ice-cream that Nina bought for us in the huge shopping arcade nearby was the most delicious that I have ever eaten! In fact ice-cream was the dessert after every meal. I learned that fruits were expensive and had to be imported from North Africa.

Nina took us one day to a famous monastery, a seventy mile drive from Moscow. It was harvesting time and, according to Nina, the workers in the wheat fields on either side of the road were university students trying to make some money during the summer vacation.

If you wanted to grow your own vegetables the government would let you have a small plot. You can't own it, but you can work on it, and plant whatever vegetables you wanted to. We saw fathers and sons working on their plots and planting vegetable seedlings. Our trip was in the nineteen-sixties, a time when Russia was a somewhat closed society and very few people visited the country. I wrote an article in the 'Manorama' about our visit.

VIENNA - AUSTRIA

Today Austria may not be a country to be reckoned with, but in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was indeed a country of some importance. It has a long, chequered history of being conquered by all sorts of people. Austria was occupied by Germany in 1938. Foreign troops left in 1955 and today Austria is a sovereign and neutral power and a member of the United Nations. It is a country of great scenic beauty and I just could not take my eyes off the

beautiful mountains and valleys that I saw from the window of the train.

In the 18th, 19th and early twentieth centuries, Vienna reached its pinnacle as a centre of art and science, and notably of music- Mozart, Hayden, Beethoven and Brahms, to mention only a few great musicians. It was also the home of Freud, the famous psychiatrist. The city's importance declined after 1918, the year the First World War ended.

On a sight seeing trip of the city, we saw the Schonbrunn Palace, the Belvedere Palace, and the classic Parliament building. Mr. George Verghese (son-in-law of Mr. C. C. Chacko of U. C. College) took us out to dinner and then to a music concert in the famous Opera House. I shall always be grateful to him for that wonderful experience - something out of this world.

PRAGUE- CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1970)

From Vienna I went on a sight-seeing trip to Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, a country that had just been overrun by Russia. In no way could that relatively small country withstand the on-slaught of a mighty neighbour like Russia. Wherever our tourist bus stopped for a meal we had only poached eggs and boiled potatoes to eat. Nobody stopped to look at or talk to strangers. My sari usually attracted attention, but not here. Everyone seemed in a hurry to get back home before dusk, when the streets looked quite deserted.

A man selling news-papers and magazines asked me where I came from. When I said that I came from India, he said, "Lucky, lucky, free, free". Today Russia itself is shaky politically and economically. I wonder how people in its satellite countries are faring.

In 1960 Czechoslovakia declared itself a Socialist Republic. The population is of mixed origin - Slovics, Czechs, Slovaks and some Germans. Roman Catholicism is the majority religion, but there are large minorities of Eastern Orthodox and Protestant people. Generally speaking, Czechoslovakia now follows the policies of Soviet Russia.

GREECE

We arrived in Athens, Greece on a Maundy Thursday, and stayed there till after Easter. It was a busy time for Church-going Greek Christians and many of them seemed to belong to that category.

I suppose it was partly because I was a student of Greek history that I found Greece fascinating. Athens is regarded as the fountain-head of Western civilisation and people come from all over the Western world to see what it has to offer them. In the golden age of Pericles (5th Century B.C.) Athens became a place to be reckoned with. Architecture, Art, and Literature rose to astonishing heights. The Parthenon was built, and Socrates came out with his philosophy. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides founded the Greek drama, and in the 4th century B. C., Alexander the Great widened the boundaries of Greece, and Athens became the capital of modern Greece.

KCJ and I went to Greece as guests of the Greek Orthodox Church. We stayed in a small "pension" near Constitution Square and the Cathedral. Soon after our arrival, George Mustakis, a Theological student, took us to the Orthodox Cathedral where a service was going on. I noticed that people were casually going in and out of the church. Some stood listening to the service and others were busy buying candles in the court-yard. I noticed that hardly anyone went into the church without a lighted candle. When the Patriarch, who was the celebrant, came down the aisle, swinging the censer with burning incense in it, people reverently made the sign of the cross. When the worshipping women noticed that we were strangers and visitors, they courteously made room for us to stand inside the church.

We were taken to two or three churches on Good Friday. While the older women stood inside the church, the younger women were busy decorating a bier for "the body of the Lord" to be taken in a procession around the church. Flowers were conveniently "on sale" outside, and every woman bought a bouquet for the bier. The children were merrily running around, enjoying the 'tamasha'.

In the evening, Christ, the King, was given a state funeral. It was a most impressive sight. There was the flower-decked bier on the state

carriage, behind which walked the Prime Minister and the members of his Cabinet, the representatives of the Air Force and the Navy, and the Boy Scout and Girl Guide troops as well, in their smart uniforms.

A goose-stepping military band played solemn music on their instruments. The procession moved slowly and solemnly through the main streets of Athens, and I could not help wondering what it must have been like in the hey-day of the Byzantine Empire.

We also saw the famous sights of Athens that attract many tourists in summer. Most ancient Greek cities had an Acropolis, a name given to the fortified part of a Greek city. The Athenian Acropolis is a hill 260 feet high. The Parthenon there is the temple to the goddess Athena, built in the 4th century B. C. During the time of Pericles, the great Athenian statesman of the 4th century B. C., he was determined to make Athens a centre of culture as well as a political power. Under his leadership Athens reached the zenith of its glory.

In 1806, Lord Elgin, British soldier and diplomat, took the 'Elgin Marbles' consisting of the Parthenon frieze and part of the Erechtheum to the British Museum. Fortunately he has left enough in Athens for tourists to see and admire! To see something like that in its natural setting is different from seeing it in a museum in another country.

On Saturday we went on a trip down to the Peloponnesus, the southernmost region of continental Greece. It produces currants, grapes, tobacco and olives but lacks grain crops which require flat, extensive fields. Sheep and goat-raising, silk-culture and fishing are the main occupations of the people in this part of the world.

Old Corinth is now in ruins. We stopped at a place where St. Paul is believed to have stood and preached. There were the ruins of a temple of Apollo here and some other god there. The guide showed us the Acropolis of Mycaene, the bee-hive tombs, the Cyclopean walls and the Lion's Gate.

It was on this trip that I was accosted by a dear old American lady with a camera, the member of another tourist group. 'O sweetie', she said to me, 'may I take a picture of you in your wonderful robe? You are Greek, aren't you? Just the person I want a picture of, to show my friends

back home'.

I told her that I was sorry to disappoint her, but I was an Indian, not a Greek. She looked slightly puzzled, since for her and people like her, an Indian was a Red Indian, and I, clearly, was not a Red Indian. I told her that what I was wearing was a sari, the dress worn by most Indian women. She did not lose that puzzled look, but took a picture, anyway. I don't think she had a clue as to where I had come from!

An English woman, a total stranger, who told me she was impressed by the questions I had asked the guide on the tour to Southern Greece, gave me a book on Greece! And I don't even know her name!

On to Epidaurus in the Peloponnesus next where, in a lonely spot we saw a huge open-air theatre, one of the oldest in existence. It was well-preserved and had perfect acoustics. We visited several small museums that kept us marvelling at the wonderful achievements of ancient Greece. Epidaurus had a famous medical centre where Hippocrates practised medicine. (460 - 370 B.C) This Greek physician is recognised as the father of modern medicine. He placed medicine on a scientific footing through the practice of bedside observation of disease. Even today medical graduates, everywhere in the world, take the Hippocratic oath at their graduation to remind them of his ideals of ethical professional conduct.

Easter Sunday is a national festival day for Greek Christians. Everybody eats spit-roasted lamb, even if two or three families have to get together to buy a lamb. Ethiopian Christians too eat roast lamb at Easter. Georges told us that his family wanted us to share their Easter lunch.

When we got to his uncle's place in a suburb of Athens, we found there a motley gathering of uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and neighbours. Even 'ya-ya', everyone's grandma, and quite a sport, was there. She looked as if she had just stepped out from the film, 'Zorba, the Greek'. She was a sweet old lady who kept pressing food on everyone, eating very little herself. The roasted lamb, with no spices, was delicious. It was eaten with a green salad, sliced tomatoes, olives and cheese, all washed down by a potent local wine. They looked awfully crest-fallen if you did not eat what they pressed on you.

When the meal, cooked and eaten in the open air, accompanied by soulful music was over, one of the men put on a record of haunting island music - 'our music'. Then one by one, the older men and women there got up and started dancing. It was all so spontaneous. And, mind you, it was a family gathering. The refreshing warmth, spontaneity and their frank enjoyment of life, have stayed in my memory. So different from the prim and proper attitude and behaviour of Syrian Christians! I thought the Greeks were half-way between Europeans and Asians. The older generation were warm, friendly and natural. As in most societies, the younger generation sat apart and seemed to want to appear sophisticated and westernised.

Like the Swiss, Egyptians and Singaporeans, every able-bodied Greek male has to do military service when they are 18. It is only for a short period, but even theological students are not exempted. We were lucky that Georges happened to be home on leave from his military training. When we were in Singapore, someone told us that most Indian parents send their sons away to India, on some pretext or the other, for them to escape the harsh military training. Since India is overpopulated and jobs are not easy to find, we have plenty of young men volunteering to join the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. So our young men do not benefit from that military discipline and training, at least for a short period, which cannot but be good for them at that stage in their lives.

ISTANBUL

Our flight from Athens to Istanbul was over the Aegean sea, and as the plane was flying quite low, we could see several Greek islands. At Istanbul airport I noticed a great deal of delay and confusion, much shouting and aimless running around before the arrival of our luggage- 'Ah, we are in Asia at last,' I said to myself - When we had finally extricated ourselves from that mess, we found ourselves bundled into a taxi which the driver claimed, had five cylinders!

On the way to the city, the garrulous but affable driver proved to be an informal guide, and kept drawing our attention to the various land-marks of the place - the Roman aqueducts for water, still in good shape, the numerous mosques, the Kemal Ataturk bridge - Ataturk (1881-

1938) was the founder of modern Turkey. He served as President of the Turkish Republic for fifteen years and carried out a drastic program of Westernization and reform, which changed the face of Turkey.

The city was founded by, and named for, Constantine I as a new capital for the Roman Empire in A. D. 330- Constantinople. It was the largest city of medieval Europe. Part of the city is in Europe, part in Asia. What used to be a Christian city is now a Turkish city and Constantine's St. Sophia's Church was changed into a mosque by the Turks. Later Kemal Ataturk turned it into a museum. The exquisite mosaics make you feel sad that it is no longer a church. There is a European part and an Asian part in Istanbul. The Turks prefer to think of themselves as Europeans!

The traffic on the roads of Istanbul was crazy with a lot of honking of horns, to which no one seemed to pay the slightest attention. Pedestrians coolly stepped off the pavements to cross the streets, weaving in and out of the confused tangles made by the vehicles. It was just bedlam! So different from cities in Europe, but quite familiar to us!

For all its crazy traffic, Istanbul is fascinating. On both sides of the Bosphorus buildings are built right down to the water-front. From our window in the hotel room, I saw a house-wife lowering an empty basket in the morning for the man from the bakery to put in bread and rolls. She then just pulled it up.

Not long after our arrival at the hotel, a car from the Patriarchate arrived to take us to the Patriarch's chapel. The driver was Greek Orthodox and spoke no English. However, that did not prevent him from pointing out to us the various tourist attractions along the route. As he nonchalantly made his tortuous way along the crowded streets, we saw that some people were doing a roaring business in salted cucumber slices. That seemed to be a popular (and sensible) snack there. The driver decided that we should eat it and, right in the middle of the street, he brought the car to a halt, asked a man to slice and salt some cucumber, gave them to us, paid for them, and would not accept money from us. I felt we were holding up the traffic, but no one seemed to mind. In Switzerland such behaviour would have brought a policeman to the spot and a heavy fine would have been the penalty for holding up the traffic!

By the time we reached the Patriarch's chapel, the service had started. The Metropolitan was already in his seat and I was embarrassed to be late, and conspicuous. I tried to stand with the members of the congregation, but everything short of physical force was used to make me stand at a high level. KCJ had a seat next to that of the Metropolitan. A little later, a group of American tourists came, and received the same VIP treatment. Some of the women were wearing very short dresses, too short for an Orthodox Church service!

After the service we were ushered into the Metropolitan's presence. He was friendly and unassuming. He gave us Easter eggs made of sugar filled with lovely sweets, tied up in colourful net handkerchiefs. We found that in all East European countries, Christians give each other Easter eggs at this time. Between us we accumulated more than a dozen! I have a feeling that Syrian Christians are a very prosaic, prim and proper community, not spontaneous and warm and do not have such customs. Later, we went to the residence of the Metropolitan and KCJ had lunch with him. He apologised to me profusely and said that tradition did not permit women to sit at his table for a meal. He had deputed a young priest who spoke English, to have lunch with me in another room!

The covered bazaar in Istanbul is a fantastic place for shopping. On sale were lovely gold ornaments with intricate designs, exquisitely beautiful articles made of alabaster and onyx, and gorgeous carpets. Much later I realized that I was foolish not to have bought some gold ornaments there.

In the museum the guide told us that the beautiful things we saw there were gifts to the sultans of Turkey from all over the world - from China to Peru . In actual fact they were part of the booty from conquests in the rampaging days of the Ottoman Empire.(14th century) Among the things we saw there were beautiful ornaments made of jade, the Peacock throne carried away from Delhi by Nadir Shah of Iran in 1739, the largest emerald in the world (the size of your fist), and the glittering ' Star of Bosphorus', reputed to be the purest diamond in the world.

By the time of Suleiman, the Magnificent, (1494 - 1566), Algiers, Persia and Arabia had come under Turkish rule. The decline of

Turkey started only in this century, after the death of Kemal Attaturk, the founder of modern Turkey. He had ruled dictatorially till his death in 1938, but he had carried out a drastic programme of Westernisation and reform, which changed the face of Turkey.

Istanbul fascinated me, as it does most visitors. The Turks do not think of themselves as Asians, though only a small part of Istanbul lies in Europe. One of our Turkish tourist guides said without batting an eye-lid, 'We are now considered Europeans'. Many Turks are now emigrating to the United States, Canada, and Australia. When we were in Australia, I felt that the Australians regreted their government's decision to allow Turks to emigrate and settle down there because of their religion, polygamy and their way of life, which was not 'European'.

On a boat trip up the Bosphorus, while we were waiting for the boat to arrive, we saw two men carrying on a brisk trade. One of them removed the scales from the fish, sliced them, sprinkled salt and pepper on them, and the other roasted them over a charcoal fire. They did not wash the fish! Annamma once told me when we were cooking fish in Hester Smith's kitchen, that 'ulumbu' was not a problem for people in Europe! Ammu and KCJ ate the fried fish sandwich - I did not; 'ulumbu' was a problem for me!

EGYPT

We went to Egypt as guests of the Coptic Church. I do not know what position Boutros - Boutros Gali had in Egypt at that time, but he used to come to Geneva occasionally for one meeting or the other. It was he who arranged for KCJ and me to go to Egypt as guests of the Coptic Church. I think we halted there for a few days on our way to India. From a note of KCJ's I learned that we had lunch with his family, and later his driver, Mohammed took us to see the Sphinx and the Pyramids.

The Greeks also had a sphinx - a winged lion with a woman's head - Egyptian sphinxes were recumbent figures usually with men's heads. The Great Sphinx of Gizeh, a colossal figure carved from natural rock, is regarded as the guardian of the Nile Valley.

It was the lack of wood and the availability of clay and stone that led to the development of the Egyptian architecture of such massive and static quality. In those days there were no cranes to lift the stones higher and higher. Hundreds of slaves, captured in battle, must have been employed in the construction of those huge pyramids. If slave-drivers used their whips cruelly and a few slaves died, who cared? Those were cruel days. Man's cruelty to man is not confined to any age - Hitler is the synonym for organised cruelty, and he belonged to this century. Why go so far? Don't we have plenty of cruelty towards minorities and the lower castes in U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan? Wasn't Sati cruel?

We went to see many churches in Cairo. In terms of architecture, all of them had domes like Muslim mosques. We walked through the narrow, crowded bazaars and bought a few things. Heavy traffic flashed past on the road abutting on the majestic Nile river. If the Nile could speak, what stories it could tell us! Here and there, close to the river bank, we saw the papyrus that ancient Egyptians used as fuel and as writing material. We also remembered that it was among such tall grass that the basket with baby Moses in it, was hidden. In ancient Egypt, people believed in a life after death, and they preserved corpses through skilful embalming. In the museums that we visited, we saw a number of mummified corpses in coffins. The bodies were preserved so that the spirits might return to them.

Egypt has always fascinated me, and I am so glad I had a chance to visit that country.

A YEAR IN THE CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING CENTRE, VELLORE. (1972 - 1973)

In 1972, when we were still in Geneva, Bishop Newbegin, who was then Bishop of Madras, told KCJ about a new institution that had just been started in Vellore - the Christian Counselling centre. As Secretary for Scholarships, KCJ had become aware that more and more people, ordained and not ordained, were applying for scholarships to undergo training in Counselling, a relatively new field for Christian workers. He felt that in his days of retirement, as an ordained priest, he

would benefit from a period of training in Counselling.

When KCJ told Dr. Blake, the President of the World Council of Churches, about his plans, he said that it was indeed a good idea but felt that he should work for the WCC for three more years so that he would be entitled to a pension, which would come in handy in his days of retirement in India. But KCJ had made up his mind.

After some correspondence with Dr. Macnab and with financial aid from a German agency, he decided to go for a year's training to the Cairnmillar Institute attached to the Independent Church in Melbourne, Australia. Dr. Macnab, the Minister of that Church and himself a Counsellor, would arrange for his training.

We spent a very happy year in the Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore. The friendships made there are still warm and close. Carlos and Saroj Welch were very good Counsellors as well as excellent trainers. They kept 'open house' and anyone could walk into their home any time and feel welcome. They have now returned to the United States where their children now live. It is not easy to fill the gap they have left behind in the area of personal counselling, but Prashantham and Meena, who have taken their place at CCC, are also good Counsellors and trainers.

I spent that year in Vellore teaching English to first-year students in the School of Nursing as well as to those of the Lab. Technician Course in the Christian Medical College.

A YEAR IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA (JULY 1974 - FEB. 1975.)

KCJ and I went to Melbourne, Australia in July , 1974, for him to get training in Counselling and Psychotherapy under Dr. Francis Macnab at the Cairnmillar Institute in Melbourne.

We arrived in Melbourne on a very cold day in the first week of July. As some one who has taught Geography in High School, I should

have known what sort of climate to expect in the Southern Hemisphere in July, which is mid-winter in Melbourne, when cold winds blow towards Southern Australia from the Antarctic. I am glad to say that that was the only 'cold' experience we had in Melbourne.

Dr. Macnab had arranged for us to stay in Surrey Hills, a suburb of Melbourne. We stayed in one of the furnished houses belonging to the Presbyterian Church, meant for missionaries on home-leave, most of them working on islands in the Pacific Ocean. Getting to the city centre was not a problem as train services were frequent and punctual, and a short walk took us to the railway station.

On Sundays Margaret Smeeth, the Secretary of the Presbyterian Church Committee, who lived in Surrey Hills, took us for the morning service in the Independent Church. Throughout our stay in Melbourne, she was our friend, philosopher and guide. She was efficiency personified and 'adopted' us, in a manner of speaking. Her parents had emigrated to Australia from New Zealand when she was in school, and after their death, her brother, Harold, lived with her. He was quite intelligent, but had difficulty enunciating his words clearly. How good and patient she was with him! She told me once that if he survived her, she had made all the financial arrangements for him to move into a Home for people like him. When Margaret died, Dr. Macnab wrote to tell us, as he knew that we were very fond of her and she, of us.

Dr. Macnab was an outstanding preacher. Perhaps on account of his interest in and concern about human relationships, his sermons usually stressed the importance that Jesus laid on His relationships with men, women, and children. I have sometimes thought that in an Orthodox or Roman Catholic Church Service, the emphasis is on the liturgy, and worshippers do not mind too much if the celebrant does not preach a sermon. But in an Anglican, Methodist or Presbyterian service, the members of the congregation sit back, expecting a good, solid sermon from the preacher - not too brief, not too long!

After the Sunday morning service, coffee was served in the parish hall, and most people stayed on for a cup of coffee, to greet friends, to exchange news, and to get acquainted with newcomers, if any. It was women I had met there who later took me to their homes for lunch and for a chat. 'Love thy neighbour', in practice. Some of them

told me that they had seen Indian women on the roads, but I was the first one they had actually met!

One day while I was standing on the platform of the Surrey Hills railway station, two elderly ladies came up with some diffidence, and asked me if my dress, with all those folds, was made by an Indian tailor. How did I fold it and keep it in a cup-board? I told them that a saree was just a piece of material, six meters long, and a little more than a meter broad. I offered to demonstrate in the waiting room how an Indian woman put on a sari. So three or four Australian women watched with great interest how an Indian woman could put on a saree in a matter of minutes!

A few days before Christmas, an elderly woman sitting next to me in a train asked me what had brought me to Australia. She wanted to know if someone had invited us to lunch on Christmas day, and was happy to hear that we had several invitations. She said that she did not like the idea of our having Christmas lunch just by ourselves. If no one else had invited us, she would be glad to, since we were strangers in the country. And to think she was a total stranger!

Margaret Smeeth was Vice - Principal of a Technical School in North Melbourne. I found that there were two kinds of schools in Australia - High Schools and Technical Schools. Academically bright students generally joined High Schools, and later went on to the University. Technical Schools were for those who wished to acquire technical skills that would enable them to find jobs quickly in one of the country's many factories. Some girls learned short-hand, typing and office practices, which would enable them to get jobs in offices; others learned sewing and garment - making. I noticed that the students spent more time in their work-shops than in class rooms. Whenever something went wrong and needed repair, the boys came with their instructor to set things right. No one seemed to crave for a degree like B. A.; M. A.; B. Sc.; and M. Sc, because they could get good jobs without degrees.. A student once asked me how long I had been in Australia. When I told him I had been there six months, he said, 'Gee, ma'am, you learned English pretty fast!' He was surprised to hear that Indians learn English in schools in India.

I don't believe that Technical Schools will ever become popular and attract students in India because of our aversion to working with

our hands. Our caste system can be attributed to that attitude to work, I suppose. It is the low-caste people who work with their hands! Both in Australia and in Europe, I found that the man of the house mowed the lawn, worked in the garden, helped with the cooking, laid the table and did the shopping on Saturdays. Most men in the United States, Europe and Australia seemed to be able to cope if the wife was ill or working late. In Geneva I had a German neighbour who used to come with his bag of tools to help me out when something went wrong. The maximum, that most Indian men can do is to change a bulb! So we call the electrician or the plumber.

In the Technical School where Margaret got me a job in the library, there was an English woman who taught English to migrant children from Europe whose mother-tongue was not English. Among them was an 'angry' sixteen-year-old boy from Yugoslavia named Dragan, who would not respond to her efforts to draw him out of his self-imposed shell. She was quite frustrated, and thought that if he, by himself, could spend some time with me, he might, perhaps, open up. I marvelled at her concern and told her I would see what I could do, and Dragan started coming to the library to spend some time with me.

At first I did all the talking, and he just listened, with an angry expression on his face. Then one day, all of a sudden, he started talking - not fluently, because he had to speak in English, but willingly and with a desire to communicate. I interrupted him once in a while to correct a flagrant mistake. He told me that back in Yugoslavia he had been regarded as a bright student, but in Australia the boys in the school thought he was stupid just because he did not speak English. In course of time, the angry expression on his face was replaced by a more pleasant one, and we felt that he could rejoin his class. Dragan must be in his forties now, married and with a family of his own. I wish I had kept in touch with him. For the sake of his family I hope the angry expression on his face has been replaced by a pleasant one!

I found the average Australian spontaneous, warm and friendly. A handsome, well-educated and well-heeled woman, who lived down the road, invited me once to have lunch with her. She asked me many questions about India and Indians. She said she had never 'met' an Indian before and never thought that there were Indians who could

speaking English so well! I told her there were many people in India who could write and speak English well and I thought our newspapers and magazines were better than those I read in Australia.

A VISIT TO AN OLD AGE HOME

In India people sometimes say wistfully that so and so is in an Old Age Home, as if that is proof that her children are uncaring. I found that Australians, and people living in Western countries, generally have another attitude to moving into an Old Age Home. When I was in Geneva, a German friend told me that her mother-in-law had decided to move into an Old Age Home. I told her that in India everybody would criticize her son and daughter-in-law. She wanted to know why!

A woman who used to come regularly to worship in the Presbyterian Church on Sundays, took me once to the Senior Citizens' Home where she lived. She had moved in there a year after her husband's death. She had a bed-room, a small sitting room and a kitchen where she liked to do her own cooking. If a time came when she did not feel up to doing that, she could have her meals in the common dining room. She came to the Independent Church driving her own car. She was fond of reading and often had to put up a 'Do not disturb' sign on her door!

Her son, daughter-in-law, and their two small children visited her on Saturdays, and the grandchildren brought their school report cards and any work they had done in school to show grandma. There were absolutely no hard feelings, no sense of being neglected. When the son and daughter-in-law, both scientists, went to Antarctica, she went and stayed with the children.

When we were in Melbourne, there was a general election. Candidates appeared in a hall and those who wished to know what their concerns were and why they wanted their votes, went to those halls to ask them questions. Those meetings were televised on the national channel!

Polling day was not a holiday. Working people stopped their cars at the polling booths, registered their votes on a machine

and went on to their places of work. After finishing their chores at home, house-wives voted in the afternoon. No public meetings, no processions, no long queues.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and planning of Mr. C. O. Thomas, who still liyes in Melbourne with his family, we had a Holy Qurbana sevice in an Anglican Church in South Melbourne occasionally. I remember that Freddie drove more than a hundred miles from where he lived to attend the service. Johnny K. John, (Alwaye settlement K. J. John's son) and his wife Chellamma, too had to come a considerable distance. There were a few Malayalee nurses working in a hospital in Melbourne and C.Baby, an Engineer, whom we had known in Kerala when he was working in Alwaye.

I am told that there are many Malayalee Indians who have settled down in Australia now, twenty-five years after we left the country, with Indian Achens to cater to their spiritual needs.

MEALS ON WHEELS

For elderly people who wished to continue to stay in their homes, but did not feel upto shopping for, and cooking their meals, there was an arrangement in Melbourne called ' Meals on Wheels'. Volunteers took turns to do the shopping and the cooking three times a week in a common kitchen. Around noon, other volunteers, men and women, came in their cars to take the cooked meals to the homes of those who lived alone, were too old to do their own cooking, but had the money to pay for their meals. In a society without servants, this seemed to be an excellent arrangement. A friend once took me in her car to see what she and her friends did as volunteers in this 'Meals on Wheels' scheme.

Margaret Smeeth once took us on a long drive to the southernmost point of the continent in order to show us the arrival of penguins from the Antarctic at dusk. They came swimming in large numbers, walking awkwardly on their very short legs to their 'homes' on the sea-shore. I could not help noticing that the large crowd, with many children in it, kept absolutely quiet, so as not to disturb and frighten the birds.

On our way to the sea-coast, there were apple orchards on both sides of the road. Apples were kept for sale on tables at the gates of farms. There were weighing machines on the table and boxes with slits for the money. People stopped, took the apples they wanted, weighed them and slipped the money into the box and drove off. I suppose that in an affluent society without have-nots there is no need for petty thieving.

A TRIP TO FIJI ISLANDS

Thanks to Dr. Macnab, we were able to go for a conference in the Fiji Islands (now Viti Levu and Vanua Levu). In the plane from Sydney we sat next to a Fijian Indian who was returning to Fiji after his first visit to his relatives in the Punjab. He was naturally thrilled with everything he had seen in the Punjab and the lavish hospitality of his relatives, who vied with one another to entertain him. I did not wish to put a damper on his enthusiasm, so I just said, ' Many of them would give their right hand (or its equivalent) to get out of India, and some of your relatives may ask you to help them do that'.

He took our address in Suva and told us he wanted to take us to have dinner with his family. Being a sceptic by nature, I thought it was just an on the-spur-of-the-moment gesture that would soon be forgotten, I regretted my scepticism when he turned up one evening in a huge car and took us to his palatial home where his wife gave us a good North Indian meal.

Two old students of Alwaye College drove more than a hundred miles to come and see us. They said that they had heard on the news bulletin on the radio that Dr. K. C. Joseph was one of the leaders at the conference in Suva, and decided to come and see him. They had gone to work in Fiji, decided to settle down there, and seemed to be very well off. Whom will the children marry when they grow up, I asked them. They said that they had not given much thought to that problem yet. We were invited to lunch by a Syrian Christian who had settled down in Suva and in his garden I saw a Kanthari bush!

In India most of us treat our servants well, but servants are servants. At the conference in Fiji I noticed that the women who did the

cooking and serving of meals, transformed themselves into entertainers after the evening meal. They got on to the stage in the hall and did a rhythmic kind of dance accompanied by singing and clapping of hands.

We had Fijian food at the conference. It was boiled colocasia (chembu) for lunch and dinner, accompanied by onion rings and tomato slices! Even KCJ, who was not fussy about food, found it difficult to stomach that food! So we went to a nearby Indian shop and bought a bottle of hot lime pickle. When we shared it with those who sat at our table, they thought it delicious.

An Indian, whom we met on the road, invited us to lunch in his home. He told us that long ago his grandfather, along with some others, had been abducted from their wheat fields in Bihar by British agents, put into lorries, taken to Calcutta, and shipped to Fiji to work in their sugar-cane plantations. Most of them, by luck had escaped from their servitude, but the descendants of others continued to work as landless labourers in sugar- cane fields, now mainly owned by wealthy Indians. That explained the women labourers in saris, whom I saw working in sugar-cane fields. I suppose they were the descendants of the ones who did not prosper in the new country.

On our way back to Melbourne, we stayed for two or three days in Sydney with Jeppu and Susan, both doctors. Susan is my cousin, Eliam's daughter. They took us around and showed us the sights of the city and its environs. Susan's brother, Unni, has now migrated to Australia with his family.

A SECOND SPELL IN VELLORE (1974 - 1978)

In 1974 we returned from Australia to the Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore. I was happy to take up a job teaching in the Ida Scudder School in Virudampet, between Vellore and Katpadi. The Principal of the school was Mr. Francis Samuel and the management was in the hands of Dr. Chinoy Chacko and Dr. P Zachariah of the Christian Medical College. The school was started mainly for the children of the C.M.C.staff, but there were several students whose parents were businessmen in Vellore town or Lecturers in Voorhees College.

The buildings were unpretentious and the laboratories had just the bare essentials, but good management and some fine students, and teachers who did not play politics, created a congenial atmosphere in the school. Mr. Francis Samuel and I got on well. He lives in Bangalore now, and drops in occasionally, when we reminisce about our years in Ida Scudder School.

I taught at least once a week in every class and got to know all the students. I think Mansur was about eleven years old when I taught him in Standard V. One day as I was talking about the Pyramids and the Sphinx in Egypt and how very, very old they were suddenly Mansur's hand shot up- 'Madam, were you a little girl when Khufu built the pyramid?' he wanted to know. The eleven-year-olds in the class did not know how to react to that query, but Anand Zachariah, sitting next to him, did. He glared at Mansur and hissed, 'Miss is not that old!' I myself did not make an issue of it! I was fifty- seven then and did not want a discussion on whether that was very old or just old!

Some years later after I had left Vellore, while I was staying with my sister in Katpadi, I thought I would take a nostalgic walk to see what the school looked like. Dusk had fallen and the guard at the school-gate, who did not know me, hesitated to let me in. However, Loknathan, the school-peon, saw me from a distance and came running, scolding the bewildered guard. As he took me round the campus, I was glad to see that the rain- tree saplings I had taken from the Sainathapuram compound were now spreading trees providing shade and shelter to those who had their lunch under them.

As I was walking back to my sister's house, my mind filled with nostalgic thoughts, a young man came up and walked along-side me. 'Madam, do you remember me?' he asked. "Of course, Mansur, how can I ever forget the boy who asked me if I was as old as the pyramids? I said. We laughed, and exchanged news as he walked with me to my sister's house.

By teaching in every class except 1 and 2 at least once a week, I got to know most of the students in the school except the very small ones. In Standard VI we were once talking about the poverty, misery and ignorance in some rural areas in India. Suddenly Sunil's hand shot up. He wanted to know what family- planning was. He said he had read

something about it in the newspaper.

I cleared my throat and said, " well, the meaning is clear, isn't it? People have to decide on the size of their families. In India there is a great deal of poverty, partly because there are too many of us. If two people decide to have only two children, the population will not increase as rapidly as it does now, and in a few years there will be more jobs, more money and fewer people. When you are old enough to get married, your doctors will be able to tell you how to keep your family small. The children listened earnestly, seemed to be satisfied with my answer, and we went on with the lesson for the day.

I spent only my mornings in the school and usually sat in the library when I was not teaching. The library building was built with the money given by Dr. Lizamma Chacko, God bless her. She had given her entire provident fund for a library building to be built in memory of her sister, Rose, who also was a doctor. I wrote to one or two Women's Groups in the United States, who sent us some books, mainly Readers' Digest Condensed books. Johnny Oommen and Suju John helped to sort out, number, and arrange the books on the shelves. The books came from the USA in large card board boxes. When the Bakers left C.M.C., they gave a lot of books to the Scudder School Library.

At the time of admission we had a brief and very informal interview, even for the young kids. I asked a smart 9-year-old once, what he would do with it if some one gave him five rupees as a present. I still remember his disarming answer ; " I would first say 'thank you', Miss".

Once a week the staff and students assembled in the school hall above the library for extra-curricular activities like elocution competitions, debates and sometimes for dramatic performances.

David Walter was a very bright student who was rather reserved and more or less kept to himself. David was once given a penalty to ' bow to the prettiest, shake hands with the wittiest, and kiss the one he loved the best." For one minute he seemed to hesitate. Everyone was on tenterhooks. How was David going to tackle that one? As David started his walk down the hall, the entire school clapped their hands rhythmically. David walked straight up to me, shook hands, bowed low, and planted a kiss on my forehead! There was a minutes silence,

and then an uproar, but a restrained one!

I have only pleasant memories of my years in Ida Scudder School . Some years after I had left the school, when I dropped in there for a visit, the Old Students of the school were having a 'get-together'. Johnny Oommen, who was presiding, came down from the platform, and introduced me to those who did not know me as ' the one and only Mrs. Joseph'. Everyone in the hall stood up and clapped . Such are the rewards of teaching in a good school. I doubt if something similar could happen in a school or college in Kerala.

K.C.J'S ILLNESS AND DEATH. August 6, 1993

Late one evening in December, 1979, when we were in the Counselling Centre, Vellore, K.C.J. took to his bed without telling us why. When I asked him what was wrong, he said he had a pain in his neck. I asked him if it was radiating to his arm. When he said it was, I had a feeling it had something to do with his heart. I called Dr. Mano Abraham, Sulo's husband, and told him what had happened. He told me to take him to the C.M. C. Hospital the next morning. Dr. George Cherian admitted him straightaway, and kept him in the hospital for more than a fortnight for observation, tests, and medication.

When he was discharged and returned home, he continued to rest in bed, getting up only for meals. When Prashantham reported to the Governing Board the nature of his illness, they decided it was time for him to retire.

When his younger brother, Isaac, who lived in Bangalore, visited him in the hospital, he said that if we moved to Bangalore, he would be able to look after him .He found a house close to his, in Indiranagar. I was sorry to leave Vellore because I knew that my teaching career was over.

Isaac visited us every day on his way to work and the brothers really enjoyed each other's company. Then, Isaac had a heart attack and died quite unexpectedly in the Chinmaya Mission Hospital. That was a sad blow for K.C.J. but life had to go on.

On Saturdays he went to the Half - Way Home in Cox Town, meant for people who were mentally disturbed and in need of counselling. Occasionally people who felt they needed someone who would understand them and help them to sort out a problem in a relationship, came to seek his help. On Sunday mornings he used to go to the service in the Orthodox Church in Hosur Road and preach a short sermon.

In July, 1993, he began to have pain in his chest occasionally. Our son-in-law, Dr. Alexander John, an experienced cardiac surgeon, told him that he knew exactly what was wrong with him. He needed cardiac surgery, which he would do, and he could have some more years of useful life. But K.C.J. said that he had lived a full life, was ready to go when God called him and did not wish to go through surgery and hospitalisation. When Alex called Dr. Cherian Varki, K.C.J.'s physician, and told him what had happened and what K.C.J. had said, Dr. Varki told him to just let him be as he knew very well the implications of his decision.

On August 6, he had a light breakfast and lay down for half an hour, as he did after every meal, wherever he was. When he got up, he went into the bath-room to have a bath. I heard a groan in the bath-room and asked him what was wrong. Saying that he had a pain in the chest, he came out and lay down on his bed. Reebe and her son, Ranjeet, were coming down the stair-case, ready to go out, and I called them to the bed-room. I took out the bottle of Isordil tablets, a medicine I had seen him take. He shook his head and assured us that he did not have any pain; it was just that he could not breathe properly. Then he said, 'Oxygen would be good now.'

I said that Alex had called to say that he had sent an ambulance van with an oxygen cylinder, and he himself was waiting in the hospital. The next minute his head slumped to one side, and I knew he was gone- a peaceful end, on his own bed, with his family around him. Within a short time our friends in Indiranagar arrived and took charge. They did everything that had to be done. They informed Thekkekara Achen, Vicar of the Hosur Road Church, as well as Koshy Achen. Everyone looked shocked and bewildered. Friends removed the furniture from the sitting room and arranged for the putting up of a shamiyana,

getting chairs- I shall always remember the leadership role played by Koshy Thykadavil in organising the help of willing friends.

August 6, the Feast of Transfiguration was, for some reason, very important to K.C.J. That is why he chose that day for his Ordination, conducted by his mentor, Augen Mar Thimotheos at 10 a. m. on August 6, 1954 in the U.C.College Chapel. And God called him to be with Him at precisely the same time twenty- five years later. A blessed coincidence.

When the late Mar Dionysius, Bishop of Madras, called on us later, he said that as August 6 was his birthday, he had gone to his parish church in Pathanapuram, as was his wont, and that was why he could not conduct K. C. J' s.funeral service. He also said that August 6 was the death anniversary of Mar Theodosius whom we knew very well as he used to be a member of the U.C. College Council.

Later our parish priest said that the foundation- stone of the Hosur Road Church (now Cathedral) was laid on August 6 and K.C. J would always be remembered there on August 6, the Feast of Transfiguration.

A large number of people attended the funeral service on August 7 conducted by Father Thekkekkara. Mr. T. B. Thomas from Alwaye represented the U. C. College. He was buried in the Hosur Road Cemetery. To a good Christian, death means :

I shall see God;
I shall see Him with my own eyes,
And He will not be a stranger.

I thank God that life goes on smoothly without too many problems. A five-minute walk takes me to a super-market, a medical shop, and a magazine shop from where I can borrow magazines for a day for one-tenth its price. The post office and bank are within walking distance. A neighbour, Mr. R. R. Menon, an old student of Alwaye College, is a friend, philosopher and guide. Reebe keeps food in the fridge and spends the nights here. Samu's daughter, Preeti, an interne in the St. John's Medical College, rings up regularly and occasionally spends the night here. Ammu, Vasu, Rhea and Bharani drop in occasionally and bring me fruit from Vasu's farm. They also let me have the car and

driver to visit friends. I miss the telephone calls of my friend from childhood days- Kunjamma Abraham. With the Psalmist I can say: ' Bless the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all his blessings'.

OUR CHILDREN and GRAND CHILDREN

A few words now about our grand-children. At the age of sixteen, Ravi, Reebe's elder son, went to Switzerland to do a course in Hotel Management. Then he went to the United States to work. He has done his M.B.A. and is a senior consultant in Ernst and Young(Financial Consultants). He is married to Louise, a Swedish girl, and they have a little daughter, Sara Rebecca Kurian.

Ranjeet, Reebe's younger son, lives in Chicago and works in the systems division of the First Chicago National Bank. In June this year, he got married to an American girl, Genevive, who grew up in Ecuador, South America. I can remember a time when people thought of Trichur and Kunnankulam as 'too far away' for marriage connection! Reebe, Kurian, his brother, Raju and sister-in-law from Dubai, attended the wedding.

Samu's older daughter, Ansu, studied Environmental Geography in the University of Pennsylvania, and now works in Washington. She has to commute twenty miles by car, morning and evening, and seems to find that tiring. For lack of good public transport in most areas of the U.S.A., roads are clogged with cars morning and evening, but there is no alternative. When people get home in the evening, they heat up food in the fridge and eat it, or go out to eat.

After taking her M.B.B.S degree from St. John's Medical College, Preeti, Samu's second daughter, has just joined the Johns Hopkins University Medical School. We were all happy and rather surprised that she got her visa to go to the U.S.A. very easily from the American Embassy office in Madras.

Bharani, Vasu's son, has just joined the 'The National Institute of Design' in Ahmedabad. We were all happy to learn that he has settled down in the hostel after a brief period of ragging. I believe that this ragging is a perverse phenomenon which some students can take gritting their teeth, and others cannot.

There have been cases of harassed students leaving an institution after their parents have gone through a lot of trouble, including payment of capitation fee, to get them admitted.

Rhea will join Brown University in Pennsylvania in September. It is said that most colleges in America do not keep track of the attendance of a student in class as we do, and most students work on their own sitting in the library. I think young people have a great capacity to adjust themselves to new methods and situations.

Reebe is active in the local Methodist Church. Samu helps to bring out a magazine for the Indian Community in their part of Germany. Ammu is a journalist, who writes articles mainly for **The Hindu**. She takes an active interest in concerns that relate to women and has travelled to Turkey, China and recently to Guwahati in North Eastern India for conferences

Reebe's husband, Kurian continues to work in Surabaya, Indonesia. Samu's husband, Dr. Alexander John, a cardiac surgeon, works in Germany. S.G.Vasudev. Ammu's husband, is a well-known painter and occasionally has exhibitions of his paintings in Bombay, Delhi, Madras and Bangalore.

I was eighty last February. I have slowed down and sometimes cannot recognise people. How I wish people would introduce themselves when they visit elderly people after a long gap! I made a fool of myself recently mistaking a young friend from the U.S.A for a cousin. I still read a great deal, write, and walk around (albeit with a strong, four-pronged metal walking stick), my hearing is good, and I can carry on a conversation with my visitors. I would like to go before people start saying : ' Poor Baby Kochamma! She used to be so lively!'. I have given up travelling, though the girls say there are wheel chairs at the air-port! I tell them, No, thank you! I have done a lot of travelling around in my life: but there comes a time when you tell yourself : 'It was all wonderful and I thank God for it. But it is enough'. I hope I can go as KCJ did--in a matter of minutes, without lingering on the threshold. But the good Lord, who has blessed and sustained me so far, is not going to desert me in the closing years of my life.

Let me close with my favourite quotation on Death. ' What is dying? I am standing on the sea-shore. A ship sails in the morning breeze and starts for the ocean. I stand watching it till at last it fades on the horizon, and someone says, 'she's gone!'

Gone? Where? Gone from my sight, that's all. She is just as large as she was. The diminished size is in me. And just when someone says; " she's gone," other voices take up a glad shout : there she comes!'

And that is dying.

A THANK YOU NOTE

When I began to write these 'Memories', I had no intention whatsoever of getting it printed. I just wrote to keep myself occupied, and did not consider myself 'big' enough for an autobiography !

As I was writing I began to enjoy myself, and thought that, perhaps, my children and grand-children, sons-in-law, siblings, relatives and friends might like to read about an era some of them knew, and others did not. When they knew what I was up to, they asked me to hurry up. My cousin, Aley Mathew, uncle Jacob's daughter, was perhaps the one most keen to read it. Unfortunately she died a few days ago in Maramon. Sorry about the delay, Aleykutty.

I am grateful to my son-in-law, S. G. Vasudev, for designing the cover page, and to Mr. & Mrs E. G. John for getting the book printed and for putting up patiently with my insistence on reading and re-reading the proofs.

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